



BROADCAST TALKS

Is Jesus the Only Way?

by Amy Orr-Ewing

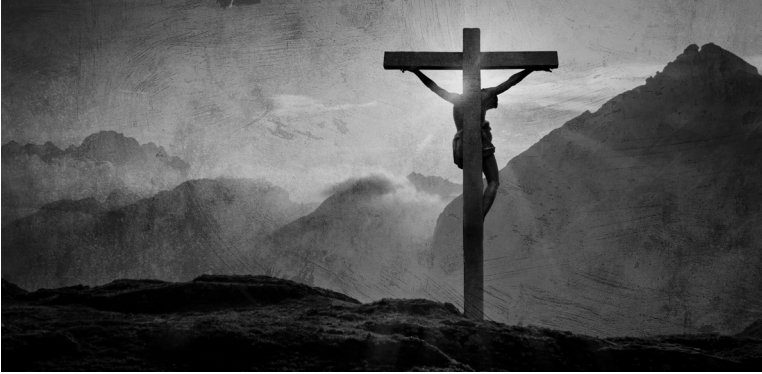


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Amy Orr-Ewing is an international author, speaker, and theologian who addresses the deep questions of our day with meaningful answers found in the Christian faith. Traveling internationally, Amy is a regular speaker across university campuses, businesses, parliaments, churches, and conferences as well as on TV and radio. She holds a DPhil in theology from the University of Oxford and is the author of multiple publications and books including *Where Is God in All the Suffering?* and bestselling, *Why Trust the Bible?*

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BROADCAST TALKS presents ideas to cultivate Christ-like thinking and living. Each issue features a transcription of a talk presented at an event of the C.S. Lewis Institute.



Today we're considering the very difficult question: Is Jesus the only way? It's a question about truth and eternity and accountability, and it's a question that can make us feel a little bit uncomfortable.

The story is told of a little boy who went to his parents, asking, "Where do people come from?" He first approached his father. He said, "Dad, how do people come to be born?" His father said, "Well, there was Adam, and there was Eve, and they had babies, and their babies had babies, and that's how people came to be born." The boy wasn't totally convinced, so he went to his mother. "Mum, how did people come to be born?" She said, "Well, over millions and millions of years, apes evolved into becoming human beings, and then their babies had babies, and that's how people came to be." The boy went back to his dad and said, "Dad! You lied to me! This is what Mum said." His father said to him, "No, Darling. Your mother was talking about her side of the family."

Sometimes questions of truth can be uncomfortable. When we talk about Jesus as the way to know God, or the only way to know God, we're reflecting on His claims to be God with us in human form. Let's take a step back. What do you think of when you look at Jesus, when you imagine Jesus? Is it a man in sandals with golden flowing locks in white robe? Is it a two-dimensional figure in a stained-glass window? Is Jesus a good, moral teacher? Or a Che Guevara-style left-wing revolutionary?

Is Jesus a spiritual guru or perhaps even a swear word? Is Jesus a distant figure of a bygone era that we might have thought about occasionally but not very relevant to us?

The beginning of John's gospel claims that Jesus Christ is God with us. In the famous song, Joan Osborne asked the question, "What if God was one of us / Just a slob like one of us / Just a stranger on the bus / Tryin' to make His way home?" In contrast, John writes,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind . . . The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." [John 1:1–4, 14 (NIV)]

The Word of God. John's gospel introduces us to the concept of God the Word. That first sentence is simple to read, but it is so profound that the greatest minds have had to grapple with it over centuries and have found levels of meaning. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

If the Word was God, how can God be with God? John introduces the nature of God as a fellowship. And that's immensely important. God is a Trinity, a Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is a fellowship in Himself. God experiences relationship in His very being. God is the Word who is at the beginning, and this word in Greek is the word *logos*, from which we derive the idea of logic. The word *logos* already had a meaning in the Greco-Roman world. Stoics used it as the rational principle behind the universe. Thought, reason, even science itself derived from the idea of *logos*. But it was also used to describe the expression of speech. *Logos* was a word spoken. Here, John takes this word *logos* which people already understood to a certain extent, and he applies it to Jesus; he says

Jesus is God the *Logos*, God the Word. He is the One Who has always existed with His Father, and He is the source of creation and information.

Before the Big Bang Theory, scientists used to believe that the universe was eternal. Opponents of the Big Bang Theory opposed it because its propagation seemed to be leading people to believe the Bible, that the universe had a beginning, that the universe was made. Earlier on, when we read the passage, that the *Logos* became flesh and dwelt among us—that idea means that the Eternal God, the Creator of the world brought into existence this universe that wasn't always eternal, that had a beginning . . . the One behind it, Jesus, the Son of God, the un-caused first cause of the universe, that *Logos* from all the information in the world, all the DNA comes. He, that *Logos*, takes flesh, and dwells among us. Jesus is God incarnate. God come down to us. He's the one coming in space and time and history.

In Jesus, God doesn't just observe this world with its sickness and suffering. He doesn't just remain far off. He doesn't even just send a book of rules, so that we could, by sheer determination, improve ourselves. He doesn't give people strange hallucinations that they need to interpret in some way. He Himself comes, taking human flesh, and He lives on this earth, so that people can know Him and know God. It's not really surprising, then, that in John's gospel, fifteen times, in reference to Jesus, he asks people to look, behold, see. He's saying, "This is utterly amazing!" No attempt for humanity to find God, to clamber our way toward God, could approximate this. The infinite glory of the Creator coming into our world as a man, as a human being: Will you look? Will you see? Now John claims, "We have seen Him, and we've seen His glory, the glory of the One and only." And he writes his gospel so that other people, people like you and I can see Him and know Him. So that's the central claim about Jesus as the way to God.

But isn't this talk about Jesus and God just a matter of faith? A kind of separate kind of category of things from knowledge or from reality

or truth? Faith, according to [atheist] Richard Dawkins, is a belief in something despite evidence to the contrary. In other words, if there were evidence, you wouldn't need faith to believe it. But biblical faith means to trust in something or Someone who is actually there. Biblical faith is a belief based on evidence. I have faith in my husband and in his love. I can't empirically quantify that love, but I have good evidence for it, and so I have faith in him.

Now, the idea of faith sometimes is explained in terms of there being different kinds of people: There are people who have faith and people who don't have faith. But the notion of "faith communities" is nonsense in one way because *everyone* has faith or a worldview; this includes atheists and secularists, who exercise as much faith in their belief system as the next person.

So as we consider this question—is Jesus the only way to God?—I want to zero in on two challenges to Christ's claim to be the way to God: first, the challenge of materialism, and second, the challenge of religious relativism.

The Challenge of Materialism

Let's think about materialism, a challenge to the idea of Jesus as the only way to God. Materialism or skepticism is based on the ideas of philosopher David Hume, who lived in the 1700s, between 1711 and 1776, in Scotland. Hume argued that all objects of human inquiry are either relations of ideas—that means mathematical statements and definitions. Or they're matters of fact—that means everything that can be known and tested empirically. Hume wrote these words:

When we run over libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, *Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number?* No. *Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence?* No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.

Do you see what he's saying here? He's saying things that are either testable empirically in a sort of scientific or repeatable experiment. Or they're matters of fact, testable analytically. And if your idea, your truth, your faith doesn't fit into one of those categories, commit it to the flames. It's worthless.

However, there are serious problems with this. And the main problem is that Hume's philosophy fails its own test, because its own statement fits into neither of his categories. It was the apologist Norman Geisler who commented, "The statement that 'only analytic or empirical propositions are meaningful' is not itself an analytic (true by definition) or empirical statement. Hence, by its own criteria it is meaningless." C.S. Lewis deals with this kind of materialist approach in his usual lucid manner, showing that a dogmatic commitment to this philosophy makes thinking itself problematic. He wrote this:

It follows that no account of the universe can be true unless that account leaves it possible for our thinking to be a real insight. A theory which explained everything else in the whole universe but which made it impossible to believe that our thinking was valid, would be utterly out of court. For that theory would itself have been reached by thinking.

Thus, a strict materialism refutes itself for the reasons given long ago by Professor J.B.S. Haldane: "If my mental processes are determined wholly by the motions of atoms in my brain, I have no reason to suppose that my beliefs are true . . . and hence I have no reason for supposing my brain to be composed of atoms."

A kind of passionate commitment to a purely material world and the nonpossibility of miraculous interventions from outside is problematic. For the materialist, thinking itself becomes a process that will fall outside the remit of that which has the capacity for meaning. Without empirical proof, this claim of Jesus to be the only way to God could still be true. It

would need to be explored, but it could still be true. Materialism cannot count out the possibility that Jesus is the way to God. And I want to suggest that it would still need to be explored. It would need to be explored on the basis of evidence, philosophical, moral, historical, cosmological evidence for God and Jesus. So the challenge of materialism can't do away with Jesus's claim to be the only way to God.

The Challenge of Religious Relativism

I want us to spend a bit longer on the challenge of religious relativism. This is the idea that all religions are basically the same. Therefore, how could we say that Jesus Christ is the way to God? Or the only way to God? That would be a terrible thing to say according to a religious relativist. Many theologians have pointed out that people often like to believe that all the religions are fundamentally the same but just superficially different, when in fact, they're superficially similar but fundamentally different.

The poet Steve Turner puts it like this in his satirical poem:

We believe there's something in horoscopes,
UFO's and bent spoons;
Jesus was a good man just like Buddha
Mohammed and ourselves.
He was a good moral teacher although we think
his good morals were bad.

We believe that all religions are basically the same,
at least the one that we read was.
They all believe in love and goodness.
They only differ on matters of
creation sin heaven hell God and salvation.

So just a few little disagreements there.



But if the religious and nonreligious worldviews or faiths are not the same and are not compatible, that is, they're contradictory, they can't all be valid. It cannot be the case that there is no God and the universe is a random product of chance and at the same time that there is a rational personal God who brought the universe into existence by design. It cannot be the case that there is no personal God, only ultimate reality, a kind of impersonal Brahman with nirvana as the aim of existence and at the same time that there is a personal God who has made real people who are capable of thought and relationship. Religious relativism has a challenge to face; these massive contradictions between all the ideas tell us that religions are not all the same.

Or we could take the question of suffering, perhaps the most important question facing us as human beings today. Different faith perspectives have wildly different answers to this question. At the funeral of the child of some dear friends, the service began with the thought that this precious baby boy who was being buried had never known a day without love. The pain and grief of those who loved him most was the cost of that love. He was loved. For me, love is the starting place for untangling questions of pain and suffering and especially the question, "Where is God in suffering?" Love seems to be at the absolute core of why suffering feels like it does. Suffering feels so wrong to us because of our love for another person who's in distress. And we instinctively rage against injustice, because we feel that people deserve love and dignity. And when I suffer, the question I'm struggling with at the deepest level is "Am I loved? And if I'm truly loved, how could all this be happening to me?"

But when we ask those kinds of questions, we're making an assumption that people have inherent and sacred value by virtue of being human. I have value because I am human. Can we take for granted that love is a foundational concept from which to ask questions about suffering and God? As we try to wrap our heads around the human experience of suffering and the question of where God is in the suffering—is love really that important? Are there other ways of looking at this question

that are not grounded in a relational perspective and all that follows from the prospect of the existence of a loving God? Could we meaningfully say that suffering is *wrong*, rather than simply unlucky?

When you look at other faith perspectives, you'll see how different they are with regard to this question. You may be aware that Eastern philosophy views human suffering through the dual lenses of karma and reincarnation. When something painful happens, karma tells me there's a cosmic moral law of cause and effect, and it guides the circumstances of our lives. So if I get a disease or have an accident, the law of karma tells me I'm getting what I deserve. The fact that the precipitating act that makes me deserve that pain may not be immediately obvious to me is complicated by the ideas of reincarnation. In this view, the universe recycles over multiple lifetimes, so we may be experiencing the effects of karma for something done in a previous life.

I had a neighbor for a couple of years in Oxford who believed that she had been a member of the French resistance during the Second World War. And she felt that her failure to pass on a particular message in time during that war was the cause of her back pain in this life. Karma was running its course. She was getting what she deserved. Suffering is inflicted in this way of looking at the world by a faceless system of law, leaving us with what it determines we deserve.

Buddhism encourages its followers to seek detachment as a way of processing suffering. Buddha left his wife and home on the night that his first child was born. He left his palace to seek enlightenment, and that meant moving away from emotional bonds to become detached from them in this world. Buddhist enlightenment is essentially following the Buddha's example in choosing disconnection from everything. Human suffering, he taught, comes from desire, wanting. Desiring something or someone is the root of suffering; the Buddhist answer is to expunge all desire for anything or anyone, to cease wanting things and reach a

state of enlightenment, which is a kind of nothingness. Is pain the cost of love? This way of looking at the world would answer yes. And so to avoid pain, the answer offered is to get rid of all attachment, even love. Eastern thought teaches karma, and Buddhist thought teaches that there is no God, there's just ultimate reality, and there's just the possibility of detachment as our route to be saved from suffering.

Another view is the idea within Islam, giving us a different perspective, a monotheistic view of the world, that there is one God, but a fatalistic religion, teaching that a transcendent God is absolutely and directly in control of every aspect of the universe. As a consequence, human beings do not have real choice. There's only one will in the universe, and that is Allah's will. That is why that word *inshallah*, meaning "if God wills it," is so significant for Muslims. A few years ago, a friend described to me his experience of training a group of Iraqi soldiers for service in their own armed forces. This particular gentleman had taken a group of Iraqi recruits, and they were doing a survival exercise in a swimming pool. The idea was that two recruits would be pushed with their pack and all their clothes and boots and everything on into the pool, and they would struggle to the surface to survive. So the initial two recruits were pushed into the deep end of the swimming pool. One struggled to the surface. The other dropped, like a stone to the bottom. The instructor described their panic as they worried for this man's safety. Someone dove in, got the pack off, released some of the weight from this individual, pulled him up to the surface, got him out of the pool, gave him a pat on the back to get the water up his chest. He was sputtering. He was alive, and they shouted at him, "Why didn't you swim?" And he shrugged. He said, "If it be his will that I die, I would have died. Clearly, it was God's will that I lived. *Inshallah*. I embraced my fate because it is the will of God."

This illustrates the extent to which a mindset of God's will being all that matters influences our way of seeing the world and acting in it, since logically both good and evil exist, they must both be God's will.

And so, when we're in pain, we conclude that everything that is happening to us is directly God's will. God is the author of it all, and so we may as well just accept it. Love doesn't really come into it, and neither does asking why.

Is it meaningless? A different point of view is offered by what we might call naturalism, materialism [discussed earlier in a different context]. Naturalism is that system derived from the belief that everything in life has a purely natural physical explanation. So when we're thinking about suffering, naturalism would say suffering doesn't really matter. God doesn't exist. There's no spiritual or religious dimension to life. There's no God who created the natural world. Human beings are our own highest authority. We're well able to determine our own destiny and our own morality, and within this way of looking at the world, any experience of pain is essentially random. It's just a consequence of living in the physical world and nothing more. And since the physical biochemical world is all that exists, any sense of connection to another person and love for them is viewed primarily physiologically, through my body, through the atoms of my existence. The pain I may experience as the result of a loss of someone I'm connected to doesn't have any deeper metaphysical spiritual dimension. Suffering, like everything else, is merely physical, material, and natural.

When it comes to suffering that might have a more directly moral dimension, this is particularly significant. For example, if a woman is sexually assaulted, naturalism has not rooted morality objectively in God. Sexual assault is wrong in absolute terms, regardless of the law of the land where it occurred; God is the ultimate judge of this. But naturalism has rooted morality subjectively, either in personal preference—"I don't want this to happen to me or those I love. Therefore, it's wrong."—or in societal taboo—"As a society, we see this is damaging, and so we need to create laws to make sure it doesn't happen." As the author and champion of atheistic naturalism, Richard Dawkins said in a radio interview, "We as human beings supply our own basis for ethics."

Perhaps a deeper and more personal question for advocates of naturalism to consider is our human anguish in response to pain. If human life isn't essentially sacred, if it is merely an accident of chance and biology and chemistry, does our outrage and anguish in the face of suffering really make sense? Why would human beings have any intrinsic worth and such a deep conscious and emotive response to pain and suffering without God existing?

The atheist professor Peter Singer argues that, in the absence of God, human beings have no more value or moral intuition than any other animal. Does human life have value? Can we hear of the deaths of young people in a classroom on the other side of the world, gunned down by an unstable classmate, and simply shrug our shoulders? When we watch a documentary about wildlife in Africa and observe a lioness catching a warthog, do we have similar reactions to when we watch a documentary about a serial killer murdering women?

I think that human life does have essential value and that our reaction to the suffering of human beings, even those we don't know, points toward this. And so we're left with the question: If it's the case that there is no god who gives human life value and meaning and significance beyond our physical existence, why do we care so much about massacres and hunger and injustice or the sufferings of other humans? Why does this darkness hurt so much? Why does suffering really matter? Where do we get our essential worth and dignity from? Outrage in reaction to suffering, including the suffering of people we don't know, and our human experience of pain itself, all confirm the common human intuition that there is more to life than some might say.

Let me offer a Christian perspective. The Christian perspective sets forth the idea that God exists and that Jesus is the way to God, that God is a personal being, that God is essentially loving, and that God has made human beings in His image, with a capacity to reason, to choose, and



to love. It could follow from this that, when we suffer, it hurts us, as human beings, in such a profound and shocking way because human beings really do matter, because we are divine image-bearers, and so our lives and well-being are sacred. That would mean that pain and suffering would hurt us at more than a physical level, and that if God is real and God is loving, pain would be the cost of love. Real love is simply not possible without freedom of choice. Compelled love is never love, and so the possibility of love entails the possibility of pain. The Bible talks of a good God creating a good world and specifically making creatures who have the capacity to love. For love to exist, freedom must exist.

I remember as a teenager growing up in the UK, in Birmingham, where I became friends with a girl whose parents were trying to force her into a marriage with someone she didn't know. She was fifteen and afraid. She had good reason to be afraid, because a relative of hers had been in the same position a year earlier. She tried to run away, but she had been knocked down by a car in the street and dragged home and forcibly taken out of the country to marry. No one had seen her or heard from her again. My friend, at fifteen, knew she didn't want that. She wanted to love and be loved. She felt that being forced into a legal partnership by her parents with someone she did not know was the antithesis of love. She believed the love she was capable of giving and receiving could not be compelled by another. So friends helped her get to a safe house.

For true love to be possible, it must be freely offered and received. We all know this to be the case. The Bible tells us that God who is love made a world in which love is possible—that means a world in which there's freedom. And we, as human beings, have used that freedom to harm, as well as to love. That is why there is suffering in this world. Genesis describes the impact of choices human beings have made on ourselves, on other people, and on the very environment of the earth. The Bible doesn't just address why bad things happen. There's a deeper kind of answer in Jesus, and this relates to why Jesus is the only way: At

the cross Jesus suffers with us and for us as human beings. The unique claim of Christ to deal with our human condition. Not to write it off as karma. Not to tell us to just detach ourselves from suffering. Not to just embrace fatalism and say, “Well, it’s all planned in advance, and it all must be God’s will, and we just fatally wait here to see what happens.” Not to embrace materialism, which reduces us to just the physics and biochemistry of our bodies.

In Jesus Christ, the sacredness of our humanity, our image-bearer status as human beings, is affirmed and is redeemed. There’s no other worldview that offers anything like this, and I want to suggest that, if it is true, it would be exclusively true. It couldn’t be true at the same time that the law of karma is at work. It couldn’t be true at the same time that there’s a sort of fatalism and that God is actually responsible for all of the harm in this world. It couldn’t be true at the same time that the answer is actually nirvana, and we need to seek detachment and turn our back on the idea of love.

Is Jesus the only way to God? If His claim is true, if the evidence about Him is trustworthy, then the answer is yes.

There’s another issue with the idea of religious relativism, the second challenge that we’re looking at—the idea of other faiths all being exactly the same or equally valid. I want to ask the question: Why can’t the Christian faith make a claim to public truth and compete in the marketplace of other ideas—philosophical, moral, scientific worldviews? Relativism, in a sense, is the objection to Christianity as the truth. It’s sometimes phrased as a sort of common generalization: All truth is relative—except for that statement itself. As Professor Roger Scruton famously put it: “If someone tells you there’s no such thing as truth, they’re asking you not to believe them, so don’t.”

Another way of articulating religious relativism is in terms of tolerance. It would be intolerant to say that Jesus is the only way to God. Tolerance of other people’s views is a highly prized virtue in our culture, but when

talking about religion, it has come to mean accepting all religions are equally true or untrue. No distinctions can be made. I want to think about this together for a moment because we could ask, “What does tolerance actually mean?” A helpful dictionary definition is this: Tolerance is the willingness to accept or tolerate somebody or something, especially opinions or behaviors that you may not agree with, or people who are not like you. The important fact here to remember is that tolerance is needed for people who have different opinions. So if I agree with you that your path leads to God as much as mine, I don’t need to be tolerant, because we agree. It is only if I disagree that I need to be tolerant toward another person’s view. If Jesus is the only way to God and I believe that, then I would need to exercise tolerance toward people who disagree with that. And I would want to ask that those people also exercise tolerance to me.

A further objection to the idea that Jesus is the only way to God infers arrogance: It would be arrogant to say that Jesus is the only way to God. This point is often made using the ancient Indian parable of an elephant in the jungle. This famous story envisages an elephant standing in the jungle, and there are different blind scribes that come up to the elephant, and these different blind scribes hold on to a different part of the elephant. One is holding the tail, and he says, “This is a rope.” Another is holding the trunk, and he says, “No. That’s not a rope. It’s a snake.” Another is holding the leg of the elephant, and he says, “You two are both wrong. It’s not a rope. It’s not a snake. It’s a tree trunk.” Another is holding the ear of the elephant and making a different point. And the moral of the story is that the different individuals, the different scribes, holding a different part of the elephant, represent the different religions of the world. The moral of the story is that no one faith has the whole truth, and it would be arrogance for one of those people to say, “I’ve got the truth, and you’re all wrong.” Everybody has a little piece of it.

The intriguing thing about this parable is that there are two important differences between the person telling the story and the people inside

the story. The first is a difference in perspective. People inside the story are close to the elephant, but the storyteller is standing back and has the whole picture. The second difference is more fundamental. The people inside the story are blind, and the person telling the story can see. The clear implication of this story is that Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, Muhammad, and Moses were blind, but the storyteller can see. Who sounds arrogant now?

It's actually just as arrogant to claim that you know that all paths lead to God as it is to claim that you agree with Jesus, that He is the only way to God. The issue on which you reject the Christian faith should not be arrogance, since surely it is just as arrogant to say that all paths lead to God or that none leads there or that one leads there. The question is not whether it's arrogant to say that Jesus is the way to God. But is it true? Is it real?

A further challenge, as we consider whether we can say Jesus is the only way to God, is the implication that Christianity is excluding and not including. That word *inclusive* is very powerful in our cultural moment. People have a sense that it would always be wrong to exclude, and it would always be right to be inclusive. Isn't it wrong to say that somebody else is wrong? Of course the ironic thing about this is that the person who is saying that it's wrong to say someone else is wrong is saying that you are wrong for saying what you believe. No matter how hard you try to escape, you can't avoid the fact that one truth claim will always exclude some possibilities. So wherever we put ourselves with regard to religious relativism, we are going to be exclusive in some sense. The person who says that all ways lead to God excludes the view that only one way leads to God or that some ways lead to God. The person who says that only some ways lead to God excludes the possibility that only one way leads to God or that all ways lead to God; the person who says that only one way to God is true also excludes the "some" view and the all view. In other words, all perspectives exclude. So it seems a little unreasonable to single out the Christian faith and reject it on the basis that it excludes.

Let's return to that beginning of John's gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning . . . And the Word became flesh, and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and only who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

The central heart of the Christian faith is that Jesus is God coming into this world to make a way for us to be with Him. That possibility does exclude the idea that everything is just karma. It does exclude the idea of fatalism, that everything is down to God. We don't have a free will. We don't have an exercise of choice possible. It does exclude the possibility that there's no God at all behind the scene of us. There's no Logos, and that Jesus obviously can't be God, since God doesn't exist. If it is true that Jesus was God taking on human flesh to come and dwell among us, that would be a way made by God for us to know Him. That is unlike any of the alternatives that are out there.

So is Jesus the only way to God? I think a good case can be made that the answer to that question is yes. I think we can examine and explore materialist objections and religious relativist objections, and we can come to the conclusion that Jesus is the only way to God.

Q&A

We're going to move on to some questions that have come in. The first is "Don't people just tend to accept the viewpoint they were raised in?"

I think this is a good question, relating to whether Jesus is the only way to God. It's the idea that it's a bit unfair that some people are "born into" the truth and other people are not born into the truth. It seems very arbitrary and maybe evidence that it couldn't be actually the truth. But I want to suggest that the Christian faith does not envisage itself as a cultural movement spread through people having children and passing

their faith on to people within their own culture. The Christian faith has always been a missionary movement. And at the heart of the Christian faith is the idea of seeking to persuade people that this is true. The central historical claim of the Christian faith is that Jesus was God incarnate with us, the Word became flesh, that He died by crucifixion at the hands of the Romans, but that three days later, His tomb was found empty. And that's why Christians preach about the resurrection of Jesus all the time and share the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus, because the idea is that there's been a public miracle in history that is there for people to scrutinize and consider and come to a conclusion about that personally on the basis of evidence. So although it may be true that often people do just accept the viewpoint of their parents, the Christian faith makes a claim to be publicly true, historically true, universally true, regardless of the culture into which we were born.

The second question that's come in: "How could I know which faith is the true one?"

I think this is a great, honest question, because it feels like a pretty daunting task to check all the evidence for all the options? We might say that we would need to spend a long time exploring Buddhism before we agreed with it or disagreed with it, or Islam or Hinduism or atheistic materialism. Surely one lifetime wouldn't be enough to explore all the possibilities and come to a conclusion about what is true. I like to think about this with an analogy that philosophers sometimes use. Imagine that we're talking about the universe, and we're asking, "Do spotted green stones exist?" What would I need to do to disprove that spotted green stones exist in the universe? I'd need to make an exhaustive study of the universe. To be certain, I'd need to know every nook and cranny, every corner of the universe, to know that there's no such thing as a spotted green stone. But what would I need to do to say a spotted green stone exists? I would need to find it. I'd need to find one.

So I would encourage you, if this is your question, to begin by examining the evidence. I'd encourage you to begin by examining the evidence for the Christian faith, philosophical, historical, moral, scientific, and personal evidence that the Christian faith is true. Once you discover and find what is true on the basis of evidence, you can then draw legitimate conclusions on the basis of that sort of evidence.

Third question: “What would you say to the idea that God is just wish fulfillment and we’re better off not deluding ourselves?”

This is an idea that the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud most popularized. He envisaged God as the ultimate wish fulfillment. So he had this idea of a father figure in the sky. Weak-minded people have a psychological or emotional need for a loving father figure in the sky to exist, and so they've created that idea and projected God into existence. C.S. Lewis famously countered that and said, “Well, couldn't we equally say to Freud that atheism is exactly the same. It's the ultimate wish fulfillment. The desire for a father figure in the sky not to exist is a projection of the human mind from the psyche of someone who doesn't want the ultimate father figure. Where does that leave us? That doesn't leave us with a conclusion as to whether God is real and Jesus is the only way to God, but it shows that the argument of wish fulfillment could cut both ways, and it suggests that we need to settle the question of whether God is real on a different basis. I would suggest we settle that question of whether God is real and Jesus is the only way on the basis of the evidence that does exist. We examine the evidence and come to a conclusion on the basis of the evidence. It's my experience that coming to know God through Jesus has been the most wonderful relationship and journey of my life. The offer at the heart of the Christian faith is for forgiveness and redemption and relationship with the Creator of this world, because, through Jesus's sacrifice on the cross, His crucifixion, He can carry away the sins and the burden and the evil and the abuse of

this world. He can carry it away from us upon Himself, and He offers His life for our life. Then, through the resurrection, He demonstrates that He has conquered the power of sin and death and evil. And so we can trust Him, not just with our lives, but with our deaths, with our eternity. We can face life and eternity with confidence, knowing that we will be with Him, loved by Him. And that's a relationship that begins in space and time now in our lives and continues through into eternity.

[Video of this talk is available at www.cslewisinstitute.org./the-only-way/. Additional information about Amy Orr-Ewing's ministry is available at: www.amyorr-ewing.com/.]

The C.S. Lewis Institute was founded in 1976 and endeavors, in the legacy of C.S. Lewis, to develop disciples who will articulate, defend, share, and live their faith in Christ in personal and public life. From its inception, the Institute has been inter-denominational, has worked closely with a variety of churches and sees itself as a servant ministry, assisting churches and pastors in making disciples of Jesus Christ. This takes the form of discipleship programs, area-wide conferences/seminars, pastor fellowships and resources in print and on the web.



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