

“Oh Buddah – What In Vishnu’s Name Is Going On?”

February 18, 2007 * John 4:4-26

I. Current breakout of world religions:

Christianity 2.1 billion
Islam 1.3 billion
Secular/Nonreligious/Agnostic/Atheist 1.1 billion
Hinduism 900 million
Primal indigenous/African traditional 400 million
Chinese Traditional Religion 394 million
Buddhism 376 million

Two easy ways to address all these religions:

1. Say, “I’m right, you’re wrong and leave it at that.
2. Say, “All roads lead to God.”

And one not-so-easy way – the way of Jesus in John 4.

II. What can we surmise about Jews and Samaritans from John 4?

- A. There was some shared history between them.
 1. Where did the Samaritans come from?

When the northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed by Assyria in the 700s B.C., the Assyrians resettled another group of conquered peoples into Israel’s territory. They intermingled and intermarried with the Jews who stayed behind, and voila, the Samaritans were born. A half-breed race. A group of people who were partly Jewish in practice, and partly pagan.

- B. There was racial and religious tension between Jews and Samaritans.
- C. Samaritans and Jews had different religious traditions.

III. So how does Jesus want us to interact with those from other faiths?

- A. He wants his followers to be inclusive.

1. What does this mean?

To be inclusive means to accept the worth and affirm the digity of another person regardless of their beliefs or behavior.

2. How does this definition differ from that of more “liberal” Christians?

This inclusiveness exists *regardless* of their beliefs and behaviors. That’s where Jesus’ definition differs from modern definitions of inclusiveness where we are told to accept and affirm another person *along with* their beliefs and behaviors. We have to accept the whole package. Well no we don’t. That’s not how God loves me. He loves me and takes me just as I am, but then he doesn’t leave me that way. His acceptance of me brings me into a radical relationship with himself, and in that relationship he then begins the astounding work of chiseling, hammering, burning the sin and evil out of me.

B. He wants his followers to be trained in apologetics.

1. What does this mean?

An apologetic is what lawyers call a “reasoned defense”. To be apologetic means you know how to explain to others why you love and follow Jesus. You know how to make others thirsty. Make them want what you have.

2. How is evangelism like fishing?

When Jesus compared evangelism to fishing, he found the perfect metaphor. Because any fisherman knows that you can’t go into the water with a sledgehammer or an AK-47 or explosives and expect to catch anything. You enter the fish’s environment quietly, respectfully, blending it, setting them at ease. Never forget what the objective is. It’s not enough that I can explain to someone why *I* am a follower of Christ; I need to also be able to explain to them why *they* need to become a follower of Christ.

C. He wants his followers to understand why his way is the best way.

1. *“End of the Spear” – though it clearly shows why Jesus’ way is the best way, how did many critics respond?*

“Although the film invests time among the tribesmen, it never really explores the idea that one man’s missionary work is another man’s ideological aggression.” said the Washington Post, reflective of many reviews.

2. *When Jesus said, “I am the way, truth and life”, was he being arrogant?*

Jesus did not say, “I am a way, a truth and a life”, he said, “I am the way, the truth, the life and no one comes to the Father but through me.” And it was not arrogance that caused him to say that, it was love. It was not arrogance that caused him to reach out to this Samaritan woman and tell her pointblank, without blinking, **“Salvation is from the Jews” – it was love.**

3. *Did Jesus have a better way for the Samaritan woman? And for the Aucas?*

Jesus lovingly, without condemnation, pulls out of this woman’s own mouth and heart the brokenness of her life. In her ignorance, her darkness, and her sin – her life was a graveyard, a shipwreck, a barren dessert. Jesus wanted to rescue her from that. His way was better. His truth was better. His life was better. Better by far, and he wanted her to have that.

The Aucas were lost in their ignorance, darkness and sin. And for generations they lived at the end of the spear, destroying each other. Jesus – the way, the truth and life – was shared with them, and their spears were broken. And for the first time ever in their history, an Auca man would live long enough to see his grandchildren. It is not arrogance to say that this way is better than how they lived before – it is love.

4. *In “How Now Shall We Live?”, we are taught to ask 3 questions of every faith & religion:*

- a. **Creation** - *Where did we come from? And who are we?*
- b. **Fall** - *What has gone wrong with the world?*

- c. **Redemption** - *What can we do to fix it?*

5. *What does Jesus offer us? How does this compare to:*

- a. *Islam?*

- b. *Buddhism?*

- c. *Any other –ism?*