

## Christ's Way – Inclusive or Exclusive? (Part 1) (Rev. Dr. John Bartol)

Does the claim of Christ, “No one comes to the father except through me” (John 14:6b), make Christianity narrow and exclusive? In seeking the answer we must clearly affirm that when Christians say that Jesus is “The way, the truth, and the life,” they are not attacking other faiths. They are affirming one of the basic truths of Christianity and telling us that their understanding of God is inseparable from Jesus Christ who has revealed God to us in this unique way.

Jesus was the first to call God “Abba,” an Aramaic word signifying “Daddy.” This word, so sacred and personal, remained in the original tongue. No one else ever claimed God as Father in this personal, intimate way. If we believe in God as heavenly Father, we do so because Jesus revealed Him. Only through exposure to the life and teaching of Christ do we come to an in-depth understanding of God as a loving Father who sent His Son to die for us.

People of all ages have asked, “What is God like? Does he understand our problems, pain’s and heartaches?” Disciple Philip asked Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father and we will be satisfied” (John 14:8 TLB). To all such questions Jesus answers, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9 b: 12:45). In Christ we see the very heart of God laid bare.

What kind of a God are you searching for? One that is distant, cold, impersonal, judgmental, demanding, unpredictable? There are plenty of those gods around today. You will find them in counterfeit Cults, New age, Eastern mysticism, Hinduism and more.

But you also have another option. If you long for a personal relationship with a God who loves you unconditionally and knows all about you and loves you just the same then the words of Christ, “No one comes to the father except through me,” take on new meaning (John 14:6). Where can you find another, who would be willing to sacrifice his own sinless life so that you may be reconciled to God.

Prof. Hendrick Kraemer makes an important distinction by pointing out that “We evangelize not because we have the truth, but because the Truth, namely Jesus Christ, has us and wills to have all men everywhere.”

As C.S. Lewis put it, “If you are searching for a God who is not only personal but super personal, it is not a question of choosing between the Christian faith and other religions. The Christian teaching is the only one on the market.” The heart of Christianity reveals a loving relationship with a personal God who is both loving and holy. Throughout the Bible we find this meaningful balance between the love of God and his holiness. His strong hatred of sin but his undying love for sinners.

Jesus revealed his wonderful plan of salvation. He said the narrow road rather than the broad one leads to life (Matt 7:13,14). Then, in the spirit of love and compassion he invites everyone, without exception, to enter the narrow gate to eternal life. *No one is excluded except those who exclude themselves.*

