

Urban Legends 2

There Are Many Ways To God

Back in 2007 we did a series we called Urban Legends. We took a look at a number of things that everybody just knows are true, but are really false.

In the old days urban legends moved around kind of slowly. Today they hit somebody's inbox and with the click of a mouse they instantly get passed on to everybody in their address book.

“An urban legend is a tale of contemporary folklore that purports to be true and is often designed to elicit an emotional response from the audience.”

Back before email you'd hear an urban legend from a friend or relative. One the biggies from the 1970's was the infamous Petition 2943 hoax. I can't tell you how many people called or wrote to me about this one.

Supposedly the American Atheist Association file a petition with the FCC to ban all religious programming from the airwaves. It was all a hoax but the FCC was buried under 30 million pieces of mail protesting the petition.

Then, just when you thought it was safe to look in your inbox a whole new generation started passing around the same bogus information, only this time it was multiplied exponentially by the internet.

Now actually, there's some of those guys on radio and TV that I'd love to see banned from the airwaves because they give Christianity a bad name, but there is no petition and it's not the government's job to police religious programming.

Most of our contemporary urban legends are innocuous at best. Most people aren't going to loose their faith in God when they find out those aren't true.

But there's a whole other list of urban legends floating around that can be spiritually deadly.

There are spiritual opinions that seem to float around as freely as internet legends that have no basis in fact, but are believed by way too many people.

In the coming weeks we're going pull a Snopes and investigate the facts that stand behind these confusing, and even deadly, spiritual urban legends.

This morning we want to tackle a legend that's believed by so many people in our culture. In fact, the number of people who are convinced this is true has grown to the millions over the last few decades. It's the spiritual urban legend that says there are many ways to God.

I. The Bible Is Trustworthy and True

You might wonder why we'd start with a statement about the Bible this morning. Aren't there lots of religious books we could look at? What about the Koran? How about Dianetics? Shouldn't we check out The Divine Principle or A Course in Miracles?

You could spend the rest of your life just searching out and reading books of world religions. Why the Bible and not something else?

Next to the question of how do you get to God, the question of which book is true is the most important question we could ever ask.

If there is a God who communicates then it would only make sense that He would communicate through the written word. That's something that can be studied, examined, verified.

So the question for us is, is the Bible really that different from other books? Is there something distinguishing that sets it apart from other books about religion and God?

Turn to Deuteronomy 18, page 190

Bible claims to come to us through human authors called prophets. Part of what marked a true prophet was the ability to foretell events. In fact God said this to His people Israel...

Because I knew that you were obstinate, And your neck was an iron sinew, And your brow bronze, (hard headed & stiff necked) even from the beginning I have declared it to you; Before it came to pass I proclaimed it to you, Lest you should say, 'My idol has done them, And my carved image and my molded image Have commanded them.'
(Isaiah 48:4,5)

Israel was constantly being sidetracked by idol worship. For them it wasn't other books, it was other gods.

So God said, “Here’s the way you can know that I alone am God. I’ll give you prophecy. My prophets will tell specifics about stuff before it happens. That way you can check it out and know for sure that it’s Me speaking.”

Now listen to this... **Read verses 21 & 22**

Think about what that’s saying. It’s saying God’s prophets are always correct. If a prophet says he’s God’s prophet and he gets something wrong, he’s not God’s prophet. He’s either deceived or a liar but he’s not God’s prophet.

In those couple of verses God was setting the bar. And the level He set it to was perfection. 100%.

God’s prophets are never wrong. That should make it real easy to tell whether a book comes from God or not.

Here’s what you’ll find when you take even a cursory look at the world’s religious books. Few contain prophecy and only the Bible even begins to meet the litmus test of 100%.

The Bible contains hundreds of predictions about Israel, the nations, and Jesus Christ. The predictions are detailed, specific, and easily verifiable.

Just the fact that Israel exists as a nation today ought to confirm the truth of the Bible. No other people has been driven out of their homeland, scattered over the face of the earth, and yet not only retained their national identity and language, but have been brought back to their homeland as a sovereign nation after 2000 years.

Israel has to exist nationally because they play a central role in end-time events.

Add to that the hundreds of other concrete, precise, explicit predictions that give names, dates, and locations and it’s obvious that the Bible is unique. Only the Bible lives up to the 100% accurate standard.

I. The Bible Is Trustworthy and True

II. The Bible Presents Jesus Christ As The Son Of God

Mark 1 page 980 read verse 1

I've had people ask, "What's the big deal? Aren't we all God's children?" Here's the difference; Jesus is never called "a" Son of God in the Bible. He's consistently called "the Son of God."

And there's a big difference between the two. Listen to this exchange:

"I and My Father are one." Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?" The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God." Jesus answered them, "do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?" (John 10:31-33, 36)

To the Jewish mind, if a person said they were the Son of God they were saying they were equal to God.

Jesus unashamedly claimed equality with God because the Bible says He is the second person of the trinity. He was with God and He was God.

Now remember, the reason we know this is true is because God has given us definitive proof that the Bible comes from Him. There's not one other religious book that has the internal evidence for inspiration that the Bible has.

There have been times in my life when thoughts of doubt have crossed my mind. Doubt is not a bad thing. In fact, doubt can lead us to stronger faith if we follow it through and find out the answers to our questions.

Only a fool would accept somebody's word about something as significant as where we'll spend eternity without any evidence that what they're saying is true. And yet people do it all the time. They buy into religion without ever seeing any substantive evidence to verify it as true.

Whenever I had doubt. Whenever I've thought, "This whole God becoming a man and dieing on a cross story sounds irrational or unbelievable," I've always gone back to the fundamental question of how can I explain the Bible?

How do I explain a book that was penned by 40 different authors over a period of 1500 years that has no contradictions and a central theme from beginning to end.

How do I explain a book that covers 1500 years of history that is 100% historically accurate?

How do I explain a book written in a time of gross scientific unenlightenment that doesn't contradict one known fact of science and refers accurately to areas of science that people were clueless in at the time it was written?

How do I explain a book that is filled to the brim with one prediction after another that can be verified as accurate down to the smallest detail?

You know what happens when I begin to honestly look at that kind of evidence? Those doubts melt away.

I live by faith but my faith isn't a blind faith. God calls us to have faith but He never asks us to have a groundless faith. It's a faith in fact.

I. The Bible Is Trustworthy and True

II. The Bible Presents Jesus Christ As The Son Of God

III. Jesus Christ Clearly Teaches That He Is The Only Way To The Father

Isaiah chapter 43 page 710 read verses 10-11

There is one God. He's the eternal God. There's one savior and that's the eternal God.

Isaiah chapter 45 read verses 21, 22

Here's the clear teaching of the Bible. You won't find this in any other religious book. You won't find this in any religion. The way to God is God!

He doesn't say look to a church, synagogue, mosque, temple, or shrine to be saved. He says, look to Me. I'm the savior. *Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.*

Turn to Luke 2 page 1005.

Now we're fast forwarding 700 years to the fulfillment of God's ancient promises.

Read verse 10-11

That baby in the manger was Christ the Lord. He was the Savior. Now look at this...

John 14 page 1059 read verse 6

Those are the words of Jesus Himself found in the Bible which backs itself up with many infallible proofs.

People say to me, "Ed that's just too narrow. How can you say you're right and everyone else is wrong?"

Here's the point. I'm not right. I have no more authority than anyone else when it comes to spiritual issues. I didn't speak the words. I didn't write the Bible. I'm just trying to be honest with what I read. And here's what I read... There aren't multiple ways to God. There's one way and that one way is Jesus Christ the Son of God.

I know this doesn't correlate with most people's thinking today but it's actually OK to point out that people are wrong about certain things.

If the computer at Super Fresh isn't programmed right and it charges me full price for an item instead of the sale price, it's OK for me to point it out.

That's not arrogant. It's not presumptuous. It's just acknowledging the truth. But when I do, it means I have to say that I'm right and someone else is wrong.

When the teacher grades the math test and the student put down $5 + 6 = 12$, the teacher has to mark it wrong. The teacher has to say that the student is in error.

That teacher isn't being haughty. That teacher is just acknowledging the facts.

If I say that the Bible says there's only one way to God I'm just acknowledging the facts.

But isn't it strange how we want to throw logic and rationality out the window when it comes to spiritual truth. All of a sudden everybody's right and no one's wrong. All religions are true

Spiritually we want to violate one of the most foundational laws of logic, the law of non-contradiction.

The law of non-contradiction says this: If two statements about one particular issue contradict one another (“The earth is flat.” And “The earth is a sphere.”), then they’re either both false or one of them is true, but they cannot both be true. To say that they are both true is literally "nonsense" because it violates the most basic common sense there is.

Think about it. We don't operate like this in any other important areas of life that deal with truth claims. If we did, life as we know it would totally fall apart.

If you finally give in to your wife and stop and ask directions someplace and two different people give you completely opposite directions, you don’t say, “They’re both correct in their own way, so it doesn’t matter which directions I follow. I want to get to Florida but it doesn’t matter whether I go 95 north or 95 south.”

No financial institution says “We say you owe us \$43,000 on your mortgage, but you say you only owe \$4300. Both are true.” Would you trust them with your savings?

No engineer says “ $8 + 32 = 40$ or $8 + 32 = 53$. Both answers are fine with me.” Would you drive over a bridge designed by that engineer?

Why is it that we see it all so clearly in all other areas of life, but are so willing to become completely irrational when it comes to religious truth?

The truth in religious truth claims may be more difficult to determine but the law of non-contradiction still applies.

I. The Bible Is Trustworthy and True

II. The Bible Presents Jesus Christ As The Son Of God

III. Jesus Christ Clearly Teaches That He Is The Only Way To The Father

IV. If There Was Another Way To God, The Cross Would Have Been A Cosmic Mistake

If it’s arrogant for a Christian to say that Jesus is the only way to God then why isn’t it arrogant for someone to say that Jesus *isn’t* the only way to God? Isn’t that a presumptuous statement?

If it's arrogant for a Christian to say that Jesus is the only way to God then why isn't it arrogant for someone to say that Jesus suffered, bled, and died for nothing?

So often you'll hear people say that all religions are ultimately teaching the same thing. We all worship the same God we just use different names for God.

That's so basically wrong that any Intro to World Religions course would clear that misconception up in a heartbeat. The Bible identifies the Father as God, the Son as God, and the Holy Spirit as God. We call that the trinity.

The Father sends the Son to be our redeemer and the Holy Spirit points us to Him. The Father has an eternal throne in heaven, the Son took on flesh, died on a cross and rose again and is seated at the right hand of the Father, and the Spirit lives in us by faith. God dwells in us through His Spirit.

Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Jainism, Bahaism, Mormonism, none of those faiths hold to a Trinitarian view of God.

We don't all worship the same God. The Bible, which substantiates itself through objective proofs, presents a view of God that's unique among the world's religions.

This is all something that has to be reckoned with. But we don't like to face the hard challenges of sorting out spiritual truth. We don't want to seem narrow and intolerant. It's a whole lot easier to just say everybody's right and nobody's wrong.

One of the great scourges of mankind has been smallpox. It's been around throughout all of recorded history. The mortality rate from smallpox is 35%. Originally doctors tried to inoculate people with small amounts of smallpox. That didn't work out too well.

In 1796 Edward Jenner, a doctor in England, discovered that immunity to smallpox could be produced by inoculating a person with material from a cowpox lesion.

By the way, our word "vaccine," comes from the root word *vacca*, which is Latin for cow.

Smallpox is the one disease that we've been able to completely eradicate from the face of the earth.

Now just suppose people would have said to Edward Jenner, “Sorry, we think you’re way is too narrow. We don’t like idea that there’s one way to cure smallpox.”

No one did that. They jumped at the chance to take the one way.

Why is it that we have no problem accepting the fact that there’s one way in the physical but can’t do it in the spiritual?

The Bible says this about God. *Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!* (Isaiah 6:3) *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!* (Revelation 4:8)

The Bible tells us that God is holy. In The Old Testament there was a holy temple, with holy priests, who offered holy sacrifices.

All of the Old Testament prefigured the final sacrifice that would atone for sin.

Remember, God said, *I, even I, am the LORD, And besides Me there is no savior.* (Isaiah 43:11)

When the Father sent the Son into the world, the second Person of the trinity came as our savior. Jesus is declared to be our savior 23 times in the New Testament.

There is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:11)

An entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (II Peter 1:11)

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. (I John 4:14)

Everything about the life of Jesus Christ was designed to culminate at the cross. He was the perfect substitute for sinners.

See, the Bible says that God is holy and we are not. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.* (I John 1:10)

The Bible says, *The wages of sin is death.* (Romans 6:23)

Every other religion outside of biblical Christianity makes us the savior.

Every religion outside of biblical Christianity says that there's something we can do to get on God's good side.

And isn't that the natural way we all view life? If you do good your rewarded, if you do bad your punished so the way to heaven must be by doing good. The way to God's good graces must be to behave the way He wants us to.

Of course we should do good. The problem is we've all violated God's commands at one time or another. In fact, Jesus said the greatest commandment was to love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.

We all break that one daily. We break that one and many more. That's why we need a savior.

Turn to Romans chapter 5 page 1108

If we could save ourselves a savior would be irrelevant.

Read verses 6-8

Once we say there's many ways to God we've just cut the heart out of the whole Bible. We've just made the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ irrelevant. We've just turned the precious cross of Christ into a cosmic mistake.

If you want to believe that there are many ways to God you just have to sincerely follow one, then you're left to explain Jesus pleading in the garden, *My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.* (Matthew 26:39) What was it that He knew He was facing?

If you want to believe that there are many ways to God you have to explain the purpose of these events:

So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him. And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe. Then they said,

“Hail, King of the Jews!” And they struck Him with their hands. (John 19:1-3)

And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center. (John 19:17,18)

Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’” Having said this, He breathed His last. (Luke 23:44-46)

And this:

Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.’” (Luke 24:1-7)

If what it takes to get to God is be a good Muslim, or a faithful Hindu, or a committed Buddhist then the whole message of sinful humanity, the promise of a savior, the birth of Christ, His suffering on the cross, the empty tomb was for nothing.

God has made the way plain. If you read through the Bible you’ll see it’s not hidden. The choice is ours. The choice is yours.

One day we all will stand before God. There’ll only be one question that God will ask of us on that day. It won’t be what religion did you practice or what church did you attend. It will be this: “What did you do with My Son?”

What will your answer be on that day? Are there many ways to God? Jesus said, *I am the way the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father except by Me.* (John 14:6)