

*"I did not come with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:1-2).*

# The Difference Between Religion and Jesus Christ

Christina wrote, declining *The Issues of Life*, citing negative childhood experiences and unwholesome influences. She also asked that there be further dialogue. I was given to share what happened in my life, briefly, and to inform her of the difference between religion, whatever it may be called, "Christianity" included, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is the first of four parts. We begin with Christina's letter and some of the reply:

Hi Victor,

I am doing very well. Thank you for asking. [...] Anyways, I am now working in several group homes as a caregiver to people with brain injury and developmental disabilities. I love my new job. It's the most rewarding thing i've ever done. I feel grateful that every day i am made aware of how precious life is. I am studying many things right now. I am presently studying buddhist philosophy and meditation at a library in Calgary (kadampa) you can check out there website if your interested. I have also committed myself to a yearlong study program at the Institute for contemporary shamanic studies. The program teaches the traditions and philosophies of turtle island, they are called the sweet sundance medicine teachings of turtle island. This is making a huge impact on my life right now and opening my eyes more and more each day that i acknowledge these teachings. I chose to be removed from your mailing list because i usually open my mail, see christian and christ written more than once and choose to ignore the entire thing. I am writing this with absolute honesty and not with the intention of offending you. I see that you have found your way to God and there are many people in my life that have chosen your path. However, i have a very difficult time accepting it as my own. Although it was the path i was given as a child i chose to look elsewhere. It is not necessarily the teaching of christ that deterred me but, in my experience, the pretentious and self righteous community that advocated them. This formed very definite opinions in my mind as a child. Now as an adult, i find that i still cling very tightly to these negative opinions and i realize that i have become judgmental and narrow minded towards Christianity and its proponents. Although i try hard to be understanding and open minded, especially considering my boyfriend's family are very strict christians, i read things like your letter and become infuriated. It only reaffirms my opinions and shuts off my interest in christianity. For example, you write in your letter: "Prayer is good, yes, but not in and of itself. Do not many religions pray? Do all love the Lord Jesus Christ? Some have never heard Him. Do

not the heathens pray too?" I want to argue this statement, but maybe i should first seek clarification. Do you mean to say that there is only one path that leads to the light? That there is only one true religion that allows for spiritual growth and enlightenment and all other paths to the light are false paths. Couldn't it be possible that god chose to reveal him/herself to humanity around the globe in different ways and that maybe our true challenge as spiritual human beings is to realize that. That god is in everything and that when people live with good intention towards one another and all of creation that they are choosing to live in the light. I believe that there are amazing similarities between the world's religions and that a true enlightened perspective realizes that we need to look past our differences of race and culture and see where we come together as children of the light and of god. I guess this is my step forward and an attempt to bridge a gap with understanding. I hope to hear from you.

Sincerely, Christina

### **Victor's reply:**

Greetings in the Lord Jesus Christ, Christina,

Please forgive me for not getting back to you any sooner. It has been so very busy. However, don't get me wrong; it is not a matter of what is or is not important; I consider your situation very important. I am satisfied that God's timing will suffice.

I am thankful to hear that you are trying to live with integrity, that you have found a rewarding job, and that you are honest and sincere with me as in this letter. You have not offended me at all.

To answer your questions, I would like to start by telling you a bit about my spiritual journey. I was born and raised Catholic in a family rather committed to Catholicism. I was an altar boy, served as president of the Catholic Youth Club, sang in the choir, and attended a boys' high school minor seminary for a year to test the waters for the vocation of priesthood. I decided against the priesthood, not comfortable with that direction at all. However, my search for depth and quality of life was not abandoned, though it seemed to take a delay or detour for some years.

When I was 25, I messed my right leg up badly in skiing, while working for the Hudson's Bay Company in Winnipeg. I was laid up for three and a half months, over a month of that in the hospital. It was at that time that I began searching in earnest for meaning to life. I was beginning to ask questions like: "Who am I? What's this life all about? Is there a God? If so, can a person talk to Him? Will He answer? What does He want of me? What is the best thing I can do with my life?" I got involved with several people from various religious circles, Catholic, Protestant, and other. I looked into Buddhism, Concept Therapy, which professed to teach and receive its substance from science and the Bible, and other philosophies. I got interested in the environment. I

was trying to find meaning and purpose. (I have the impression that something similar is happening to you).

I had quit the Bay, finding it quite meaningless being there. In my search, I was impacted by Concept Therapy which taught that by study, and learning the “truth,” we could reach “cosmic consciousness,” that we could be in tune and harmony with everything around us, that we could throw off the ignorance and shackles of religion, particularly Christianity. I felt like I was walking on air. Life became very exciting and I was contemplating being an instructor. Through this whole process and search, I began to read the Bible more earnestly, but got nothing out of it that I could tell. I understood nothing, and I mean nothing. Here and there, however, some people would tell me about Jesus Christ, how He had been crucified for me, and how He was the Savior of the world.

In my search, I recall, as you now think, I believed that there are many ways to God...Buddhism, the Muslim religion, Hinduism, etc. One day, my uncle spoke to me these words:

“Victor...Buddha, Krishna, Mohammed and all those spiritual leaders are in their graves to this day. Jesus Christ’s grave alone is empty. Those men said, ‘Come, and I will show you the way, and the truth’ but Jesus Christ said, ‘I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man can come unto the Father but by Me.’ History (BC-AD) surrounds Jesus Christ. It does not do so with any other.”

Those words stuck with me. My uncle was devout Catholic, and after being married and having a family, and losing his wife to some illness, he became a priest, something he had always wanted. While I do not and cannot agree with his walk or “path,” knowing the teachings and practices, those words stayed with me.

In my searching, which grew increasingly intense, I decided to fast for three days and nights without food or water, and cried out to God in prayer for Him to make Himself known to me. It was not long after that, when I had a dream. It was, using common terminology (which I do not use now), of the “Second Coming” of Christ. This was the first time God had manifest Himself to me. In that dream, I saw the face of Jesus Christ. The whole world had stopped at His coming. Everything fell into complete stillness and silence. That dream so impacted me. I was never before or ever thereafter as afraid as I was in that dream. I woke up soaking wet with perspiration. The thing was that He was not frightening me, but my Catholic doctrine and understanding was. I thought I was surely a goner, being a creature that did not measure up to His love and beauty of character, virtue and perfection. I thought I was doomed to eternal hellfire.

Immediately I set out to be good, to be clean, upright, honest, without vice, not giving in to the lusts of my flesh, whether in mind or body. I tried hard, very hard to measure up to God’s requirement of me, as I perceived it. I labored to be acceptable to Him. I found such an undertaking utterly impossible and hopeless. I was about to

give up when I received another dream. In that dream, God spoke to me and said, “Victor, don’t give up; keep going; you are almost there.”

Shortly after, a man came into town to service the mobile homes in my sales branch in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. He was well versed in the Scriptures, and immediately began to open and to share those with me. He did so for seven evenings. He was telling me that I could not clean up my own life, that it was impossible for me to make myself good or acceptable to God, that only by admitting myself a sinner, and by putting my entire trust and dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ (the anointed one), could and would I be brought to victory and salvation. Here I was, without the answer, but this man declared, without hesitation or doubt, that Jesus, the Anointed of God, the Christ, IS The Answer. I, the proud, cigar-smoking businessman, believed, got down on the floor, on my knees, and awkwardly confessed myself incapable of making myself right, of “cleaning up my act.” I asked Jesus Christ to take over my life. I confessed Him as Lord. That was it...no bells, no whistles, no lights, no sounds, no answer. It was late, and I went home, perhaps a bit disappointed...not knowing that I was different. One Scripture I remember that stood out among others was:

**Romans 10:9 ISV**

(9) If you declare with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

In the following days, my life had somehow changed, and was changing. The vices I had tried so hard to defeat were disappearing...and I was not the one doing it. I found myself with peace and purpose for the first time. I now began to see and hear and understand things I had never been able to before. The Bible, which I had read through completely, and of which I had understood nothing, was now alive to me. No other book was, but the Bible was suddenly a Living Book, not because I was reading it, not because I had asked to understand it, but simply because it was alive, without explanation or anything I did.

I recall a few days after my conversion that I used the Lord’s Name in vain, in cussing, which, in spite of my trying to “clean up my act” in days previous, I had done without conscience or remorse. (I can’t explain it to you now; maybe later I will have the privilege of doing so). This time, after conversion, using His Name in vain struck me to the heart with great impact. Did I feel horrible! It did not bother me before, but now it did. For a moment, I thought, “I haven’t changed! I used His Name in vain!” But I soon realized that the fact that it bothered me was an indication that I had indeed changed. Something was different. There was a new nature within, recoiling to that old nature’s disposition still there. That never happened again, not in 31 years.

I contacted former people with whom I had been involved in my search. I wrote my former Concept Therapy instructor in Ontario, and jubilantly declared to him that I had found the Answer to life. I had previously been asking him for answers to my troubling questions on life’s issues, and receiving no answers, except that I would

receive them at such and such a conference, in such and such a city, at such and such a time (sometimes more than a year in the future). For these conferences, I had to pay good money too. I told Harry Roder (the instructor) that I had the answers now, that Jesus did not make me go to conferences, or make me wait, or charge me, but that the moment I acknowledged Him as Lord, and committed myself to Him, I had the answers, and He was them...all of them! I told Harry he would never attain to that "cosmic consciousness" he was promising everyone else unless he too discovered Jesus Christ as Lord. I never heard from Harry again. You understand that, I think. There is, as you suggest, something quite repugnant in that Name to people.

At one point, I had determined to go back to the Catholic Church, until God set me down to read all of Paul's letters in the New Testament. Reading those in one sitting, so to speak, He opened my understanding and showed me that what was in Scripture and what the Catholic Church taught and practiced were very different indeed. I could not go back there in good conscience. There was formed a chasm that could not be crossed between me and my family, friends, and associations from then on. This was according to the warning words of Jesus:

**Matthew 10:34-39 KJV**

(34) Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

(35) For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

(36) And a man's foes [shall be] they of his own household.

(37) He that loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

(38) And he that takes not his cross, and follows after Me, is not worthy of Me.

(39) He that finds his life shall lose it: and he that loses his life for My sake shall find it.

There is great unreality and hypocrisy in nominal Christendom. They try to be good, to be nice, knowing they are supposed to be, but when the chips are down, when brought to the wire, all goodness and nicety disappears. Often, it takes no challenge or crisis at all. At the same time, they will not face the reality of the ways of Jesus Christ as just quoted above. He does divide; He does cause sorrow. When the truth is spoken, and some believe and some don't, automatically a division comes if those believing the truth are determined to put action to their words and beliefs. It is easy to have beliefs, without commitment to those beliefs, but one will live out that which he or she truly believes. Many think that mental belief alone of doctrine or true things is sufficient. There is nothing further from the truth than that notion. Jesus Christ calls on those who believe to follow Him, to take up their cross, to deny themselves,

to forsake all that would disagree with that walk, as good as those things might be in and of themselves. It is “crucial” to do so.

Christina, let me tell you something concerning the use of the Lord’s Name in vain. I discovered that while people have often been in the habit of using His Name in vain, the case is not so with any other name. Watch a movie or two, or some programs on television, or listen to conversations in many places, with many people, and often you will hear the Lord’s Name used in vain, in cursing and swearing, and in exclamations. Why? Why not the Queen’s name, or Buddha’s, or Krishna’s, or Mohammed’s? Why not another name but that One? Some say that in other cultures and countries of other religions, perhaps the names of the leaders of those religions are “used in vain,” but that is not so. It does not happen. Why? I know why. But I will leave you to think about it.

Why is there something repugnant in His Name? Why were you turned off by my letters, primarily because of the Name, as you say, and not so much by the ideas or declarations, although those too, yet because they were connected to Him? Is it because of your past experiences connected with His Name as you suggest or think? Why was I using His Name in vain, until I met Him? Why was I embarrassed at the mention of it? Why do not people blush or turn the other way sheepishly when hearing about Buddha or Mohammed, or a US president, or some Greek or Roman deity? But when they hear the Name of Jesus, they often get that strange and uncomfortable look on their faces, or they nervously giggle, or outright mock and/or ostracize those who use His Name with respect and honor. Why? Something to think about.

Now for your sore spot and quandary. When I came to know the Lord Jesus Christ, the One of Whom the entire Bible is about (though when I read it before my change came, I could not discern it), I also discovered the very truth of His Words, saying: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man can come unto the Father but by Me” (John 14:6).

It is also written: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Christina, it is true that there is only one way, and that way is not a religion but a Person, and that One Person was none other than God in the flesh Himself. I found that out when I finally “found the Path,” as you put it. He was the only one Who could conquer death, which He did by the resurrection. Only God can do that. When one discovers the Truth, one knows the false too. It is obvious. I am told that they train counterfeit experts how to know counterfeit money by never showing them counterfeit money, but rather by showing them the real thing only, over and over again. Then, when the counterfeit comes, they know the real so well that they automatically spot the false. When one comes to know the truth, he or she also comes to know the false, automatically.

It is thought that God has come in many persons, in various cultures, as you perhaps think. The Bible, the record of Jesus Christ, says:

**John 3:13 ISV**

(13) "No one has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven." (Jesus spoke those words of Himself). And:

**John 3:16-18 KJV**

(16) For God so loved the world, that He gave His **only begotten Son**, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

(17) For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.

(18) He that believes on Him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the Name of the **only begotten Son of God**.

A peculiar thing is that people will flock to New Age, to Buddhism, to "Muslimism," shamanism, to any religion, philosophy, set of beliefs, or cause, no matter how bizarre or ridiculous, but they are repelled by the Lord Jesus Christ. Interesting. The Bible calls that disposition against Jesus Christ, the sin nature, of which ALL men are partakers, and declares that it hates God. As it is written:

**Isaiah 53:2-3 GW**

(2) He grew up in His Presence like a young tree, like a root out of dry ground. He had no form or majesty that would make us look at Him. He had nothing in His appearance that would make us desire Him.

(3) He was despised and rejected by people. He was a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering. He was despised like one from whom people turn their faces, and we didn't consider Him to be worth anything.

Let me ask you a question: If there are many ways, and Christianity is one of them, and Christianity is founded on Jesus Christ's words, and again, if you consider His way to be a valid one, why do people not believe His Words and claims? They call Him a great teacher and a prophet; even the Muslims call Him a prophet of God, yet these all refuse to believe His claims. As it is written:

**Matthew 15:8-9 GW**

(8) 'These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me.

(9) Their worship of Me is pointless, because their teachings are rules made by humans.'

I would like you to know something else, Christina. I said that the one way, or path is not a religion, but a Person, Which Jesus Christ declared He is. It is evident that Christianity is a religion, along with all the others. Therefore, Christianity is not the Way either. You say you have a boyfriend whose family is very strictly Christian. If what they have is religion, they do not know the Lord Jesus Christ. If they do not know the Lord Jesus Christ, then all they do and say in His Name is vain and empty, and of no value whatsoever to Him, or to anyone else. Such religion makes one “pretentious and self-righteous,” as you put it. External religion always has done so, and always will.

I tell you the truth. Many in Jesus’ day were known as God’s people, and were very religious. They tithed, prayed, fasted, gave to the poor, attended “church” regularly, witnessed to others, read the Scriptures devoutly, and yet were enemies of God. They crucified Jesus Christ, Who came, sent of God, and in Whom God dwelt and manifest Himself to mankind, at His chosen time of history. The One these people professed to worship, they crucified. Religion does that, and is never the way, or the path, no matter what it is called, not even Christianity.

More than a billion people in this world profess to be Christian, of one sort or another. Few, very few, know the Lord Jesus Christ and love and obey Him. What you experienced as a child was not Jesus Christ, but religion. What you experienced was a testimony to man’s righteousness, which is an effrontery to God, and not God’s righteousness. A prophet of God, Isaiah, declared this:

**Isaiah 64:6 KJV**

(6) But we are all as an unclean [thing], and all our righteousnesses [are] as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

I found that out for and of myself, not by reading the Scriptures, but by experience, as I have already related to you, and the Scriptures have confirmed these things to me.

God’s righteousness can only be found in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ dwelling in a true worshiper of God. It is not about religious affiliation, or religious works at all. As Jesus said to the woman at the well:

**John 4:22-24 GW**

(22) You don't know what you're worshiping. We Jews know what we're worshiping, because salvation comes from the Jews.

(23) Indeed, the time is coming, and it is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. The Father is looking for people like that to worship Him.

(24) God is a spirit. Those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Connection and harmony with God can only come through faith in Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul declared:

**Galatians 2:20-21 KJV**

(20) I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me.

(21) I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness comes by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Christina, you write:

"I believe that there are amazing similarities between the worlds religions and that a true enlightened perspective realizes that we need to look past our differences of race and culture and see where we come together as children of the light and of god."

While there are similarities in many things, religion, whatever label it may be given, is very different from faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. When you get right down to it, there are only two religions in this world, the false and the true. If you were to compare Buddhism, for example, to true faith in Jesus Christ, they are very different. Go to my website: [www.telusplanet.net/public/harvesth](http://www.telusplanet.net/public/harvesth), click on "Writings," and look up "Buddhism..." As well, you may want to read "Counterfeit Christianity." You will also find glaring differences between Jesus Christ and His teachings, and the Muslim religion. People have the erroneous notion that these are all compatible. Not so at all. I have read the Koran, and the Koran is quite against Jesus Christ and His teachings, as is their doctrine and religious practice, though they profess to revere Him as a prophet. John the Baptist, who was sent by God from birth, to introduce Jesus to Israel, said this:

**John 3:35-36 KJV**

(35) The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand.

(36) He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him.

John told it like it was, and did not mince words. It cost him his life. Jesus said of him, "Of all men born of women, John is the greatest..." Jesus went on to say, however, "...but the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he." That is the great and awesome privilege Jesus Christ has in store for those who repent of their own power and understanding, and turn to Him with all their hearts. He is the Way.

You have heard from me as you hoped. I ask you to diligently read that which I have spent some time putting together for you. Do not take this letter lightly. I know whereof I speak, and hope that God will grant you the grace to know the same. Mind you, if you should take the One, True Path, it will require everything of you, even your very life. Are you willing to contemplate that?

Victor Hafichuk

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