

**The Way**  
John 14:1-6  
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In a video message to churchgoers, one of the most-recognized religious leaders in the world made this stunning statement: “*Many think differently, feel differently, seeking God or meeting God in different ways. In this crowd, in this range of religions, there is only one certainty that we have for all: we are all children of God.*”

A popular pastor and best-selling author unveiled his belief in universalism when he said this: “*There may be many ways to Jesus.*”

On Monday I listened to a so-called pastor preach these words: “*The Christ is you and he lives in you. He's your travel guide to the steps along the way to enlightenment.*”

And here are some common quotes that many Americans and some Christians hold to:

*It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere.*

*Good people go to heaven.*

*My God wouldn't send anyone to Hell.*

*Good works will get you to heaven.*

*Whatever works for you is true for you.*

*It's arrogant to believe there's only one way to heaven.*

Dr. Howard Hendricks used to say, “*A mist in the pulpit is a fog in the pew.*” I'll make sure there's no mist up here if you'll make sure there's no fog out there. You may not agree with everything I'm going to say but could I ask you to not shut down? I urge you to understand and apply what you're going to hear...because your eternity literally depends upon it.

In John 14:6, Jesus said, “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*” Here's the big idea, the main point, the sermon in a sentence: *If I believe the Bible, I must say that Jesus is the only way.* Let me make it more personal. If you do not believe in, and receive Jesus Christ, as the only way to heaven, you will spend eternity in the neverending fires of hell.

That's quite an opening, isn't it? What I just said is politically incorrect but it is biblically correct. We could call this tough truth...and gracious good news.

We shouldn't be surprised that our culture and even some religious leaders reject the truth of Christianity. What is shocking is that according to a 2008 Pew Forum poll of 35,000 Americans, "*57% of evangelical church attenders believe many religions can lead to eternal life.*" This study found a "*growing pluralistic impulse toward tolerance...*" Many were so stunned by these findings that the Pew Forum went back and did further polling. Unfortunately, the results were confirmed.

And things have only gotten worse since 2008. The "nones," a category that includes people who self-identify as atheists or agnostics, now make up 23% of adults, up from 16% just eight years ago. 7.5 million Americans have "lost their religion" since 2012. A new book summarizes the spiritual state of this growing segment of the population. Here's the title: *Not THAT Kind of Christian*. The subtitle says it's for "Nones, Dones and Prodigal Sons."

My aim today is lofty and perhaps unattainable. I want each of you to agree with this statement by the time we're finished: *If I believe the Bible, I must say that Jesus is the only way.*

Ray Pritchard says there are at least six challenges when preaching that Jesus is the only way.

1. Many of us already know the answer to this question.
2. Most of the world gives a different answer than we give.
3. A number of churches give a different answer than the one we give.
4. Some who agree with our answer don't like to talk about it openly.
5. Many people react negatively when we say that Jesus is the only way to heaven. Sometimes they hurl bitter invectives at us, using words like arrogant, bigoted, intolerant, exclusive and narrow-minded. They may call us hatemongers.
6. There are some who would ban us from saying publicly what we believe. That's certainly the case in some parts of the world where Christians are being persecuted and is increasingly becoming prohibited in our pluralistic culture.

We're not insulated from this in our community. It's tempting to think that the Quad Cities is saturated with churches that are getting the gospel out. Not so much. In a recently released [Barna study](#), our community is #27 on the list of America's top churchless cities. There's only one other Midwestern city that ranked higher (or lower) – Flint, Michigan (how sad about their water situation). That means that God has placed us in the second most churchless metro area in the Midwest! Let's continue to live on mission for Him as we present Jesus as the only way to the Father.

Last week Jason Crosby did a great job preaching on Jesus as the Good Shepherd, pointing out that the word “good” shows that Jesus is in a category all by Himself. He is *the* good shepherd.

As we focus on the fifth “I Am” statement of Jesus, we discover that the disciples are distraught and filled with fear because He has just announced that He is leaving them in chapter 13.

### What Jesus Offers

Jesus gives us at least four assurances in [John 14](#).

**1. Peace** (1). The disciples were upset and so Jesus looked at them with tenderness and said in [verse 1](#): “***Let not your hearts be troubled.***” The tense here means to “*stop letting your hearts be troubled,*” indicating that they were already wigging out and falling apart. The word “*your*” is plural as Jesus moves from talking to Peter to the entire team. “**Troubled**” literally means, “*to be stirred up.*”

In the second half of [verse 1](#), Jesus makes another claim to deity: “***Believe in God; believe also in me.***” He’s saying something like this: “*You trust in God who is invisible and that’s great; now it’s time to trust in me, even though I will be leaving you for awhile.*” The only way to have peace in the midst of troubled times is to trust in Christ.

**2. Place** (2, 3a). For those who know Jesus, death is not an eerie journey to an unknown destination. Believers are assured that there is a place where all wrongs will be made right, where all imbalances will be straightened out. Look at [verse 2](#): “***In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?***” The Greek word for “rooms” here means to “*abide*” or “*remain,*” and refers to something that is not

temporary, but permanent. Friends, our place here won't last but we're headed to a place that is everlasting

I mention this thought in almost every funeral message I give: *We often think that this is the land of the living, and that when we die we go the land of the dead. The opposite is really true – this is the land of the dying, when our life here is over, we are transferred to the land of the living – either to a place of eternal joy or to a place of eternal torment. There are really only two possible destinations.*

When Jesus said that He's going ahead to prepare a place for them, He's drawing on a very familiar image. In those days it was customary for travelers to send someone ahead to find lodging and make arrangements in a distant city – they didn't have GPS on their phones or a Travelocity app. That's what happened on the night of the last supper when Jesus sent two of his disciples ahead of the rest to get the upper room ready.

It's interesting that Jesus has prepared a room for us even though there was no room for Him when He was born. Despite the fact that we kicked Jesus out of our world, Jesus invites us into His. Jesus said that there is a place for those who believe in Him. In fact, He left the disciples in order to get it ready for them, and for us.

Jesus gives us *peace* and He calls us to another *place*. The third assurance is to trust the *promise* of Jesus.

**3. Promise (3).** Jesus calms his frantic followers in verse 3, "*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.*" Jesus is saying, "*I'm not just going to show you the way to the place I've prepared, or just give you a map. I promise to come back and take you to that place so that we can be together forever. Then you'll finally be home.*" Jesus reinforces this promise in John 14:18: "***I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.***"

Some additional cultural context is helpful here. When a son wanted to get married, he and his father would add a room on to the Father's house. When the addition was finished, the son would go and get his bride for the wedding and then they would move into the room prepared for them. Likewise, Jesus is preparing a room for His bride, the church, right now. When the time is right He will gather us and bring us to the Father's house.

Jesus guarantees that if we put our full confidence in Him, we'll be with Him forever. It's his promise. The Bible is full of the promises of God and not one of them has ever been broken. Psalm 145:13: "***The Lord is faithful to all His promises and loving toward all He has made.***"

Let's trust His *peace*, let's focus on the right *place*, let's claim His *promises* and then, let's commit to follow His *plan*.

**4. Plan** (4-6). In verse 4, Jesus said, "***And you know the way to where I am going.***" Thomas spoke up for the rest of the timid team: "***Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?***" Thomas gets a bad rap for doubting but I see him as one who was searching. He wasn't afraid to ask questions, and you shouldn't be either.

In verse 6 Jesus answered, "***I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.***" Jesus is the only way, the only truth, and the only life. There is no other plan but the person of Jesus. There is no way to get to heaven unless we go through Him.

Listen. Jesus is very *inclusive* in the sense that everyone is invited to a relationship with Him as John 6:37 states: "***...and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.***" But, His claims are extremely *exclusive* in that there is no other way to Heaven except through Him.

How does this mesh in a pluralistic society like ours that values variety and excludes exclusive truth claims? Though Christianity still dominates by sheer numbers, the U.S. now has a greater diversity of religious groups than any country in recorded history. Did you know that there are now more Muslims in America than there are Methodists?

It's helpful to remember that the world of the biblical authors was filled with paganism and pluralism as well. In the midst of all this doctrinal diversity, the Bible makes some rather startling claims that run counter-cultural to the pluralistic mantra of religious tolerance.

*If I believe the Bible, I must say that Jesus is the only way.* John 14:6 is more than sufficient but here are 8 other passages that give us overwhelming evidence that Jesus is the only way to heaven.

- In Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus made it clear that the way is narrow and restrictive: “*Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.*”
- John 3:36: “*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*”
- John 5:23: “*Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.*”
- John 11:25 will be our text for our five Easter services in three weeks: “*Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.*”
- Peter boldly states in Acts 4:12: “*And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*”
- Acts 17:30-31: “*The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.*”
- 1 Corinthians 3:11: “*For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*”
- 1 Timothy 2:5: “*For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*”
- 1 John 5:12: “*Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.*”

These passages are extremely exclusive and overwhelmingly clear: *Jesus is the only way to heaven*. His statements of divine authority are incompatible with the homogenizing views of religious pluralists. The claims of Christ are outrageous but they happen to be what G.K. Chesterton called “*the wild truth.*”

Let’s dive more deeply into John 14:6: “*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*”

- When Jesus uses the phrase, “***I AM,***” He is once again claiming the name of Yahweh for Himself from Exodus 3:14. He is God in human flesh. He is the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Gate, the Good Shepherd,

the Way and the truth and the life, the Vine, the Alpha and Omega, and the Resurrection and the Life. Jesus claimed to be God, a claim that no other religious leader has made – not Mohammed, Buddha or Confucious. No one else did the miracles He did, lived a sinless life like He did, died like he died as our substitute and rose again on the third day.

- Notice that this verse begins with the word “**I**.” In fact, eleven times in just six verses, Jesus uses the personal pronoun – I, me, or my. We are not saved by a principle or a force but by a person. Jesus did not say that He knew the way, the truth and the life, or even that he taught these great principles. He declared Himself to be the embodiment of the way, the truth and the life. While answering all of life’s questions, Jesus doesn’t offer a recipe, or a bunch of rules or rituals to follow; instead He gives us a relationship with Himself. His plan is wrapped up in a Person.
- Jesus doesn’t say, “*I am a way, and a truth and a life,*” but rather, “***I am the way (that is, the only way), I am the truth (that is, the only truth), and the life (that is, the only life).***”
- All three concepts are active and dynamic. The way *brings* to God; the truth *makes* us free; and the life *produces* relationship. Without the way there is no going, without the truth there is no knowing, without the life there is no growing.
- The context indicates that the idea of “*the way*” predominates. The word “***way***” is used three times in verses 4, 5 and 6. We could put it like this: “*I am the way that reveals the truth about God and gives life to those who believe.*” Literally, “*I am the way because I am the truth and the life.*”
- There is only one avenue to salvation. With Christ removed there is no redemptive truth, no everlasting life and no way to the Father. While other religions offer systems of thought that try to bridge the gap between man and God, Jesus is the only one who has succeeded in bridging the divide.

Since every word of this astonishing statement challenges the fundamental beliefs of our culture, let’s drill down on each phrase.

**1. Jesus is the way.** Jesus is categorically stating that only one way is right and every other way is wrong. Jesus does not merely show the way; He is Himself the way. This has a twofold meaning. He is the way *from God to us* and also the way from *us to God*. The only way to get to God is through Jesus.

*If I believe the Bible, I must say that Jesus is the only way.*

Incidentally, the fact that Jesus is the only way was so central to the understanding of early Christianity in the Book of Acts, that believers were known as being part of “***the way***.” It’s one of the earliest names given to the Christian community, used six different times in Acts.

The way to heaven is not through a religious system or by following a set of religious rituals. It’s not within you and it’s not by your sincere efforts.

**Proverbs 14:12: “*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.*”**

In Mark 12:14, we read that even the enemies knew that Jesus was the only way to the Father when they said: “***you truly teach the way of God.***”

**2. Jesus is the truth.** The word “truth” in Scripture is used in two ways: true as contrasted with false, and genuine as opposed to fake. Jesus is authentic and trustworthy. When we look at Jesus we come face-to-face with certainty and reality. The Bible describes truth as not just something that is simply intellectual; it also has a moral dimension to it. John 3:21 refers to *doing* the truth: “***But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light...***”

Truth is the scarcest commodity in the world. We hear people say, “*that might be true for you, but it’s not for me.*” Researcher George Barna has discovered that nearly 75% of Americans do NOT believe in absolute truth. Here’s the sad part about that. Without the clarity and consistency of absolute moral truth, we are reduced to doing what seems right, what feels good, what produces the least resistance, and what provides the greatest personal fulfillment.

Listen. It’s not mean or bigoted or narrow minded to say that Jesus is the only way if it’s the truth. It would be mean and bigoted and narrow minded to not tell people that Jesus is the only way and the only truth and the only life!

Jesus rises above our cultural confusion and shouts out, “*I am the truth. Get to know me and you will discover that which is totally true and transforming.*”

Truth is a very exclusive thing because it implies an objective standard. It is not something that changes with the whims of emotion or time or culture. What was true 100 years ago is true this year because, as Hebrews 13:8 states: “***Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.***”

Friend, if you’re searching for truth, ask your questions. Research the relevance of the Bible. Seek after truth. There’s an apologetics conference coming up in Bettendorf (there’s more information in the bulletin). Winston Churchill once said, “*Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing happened.*”

Do you remember that scene from “A Few Good Men” when Jack Nicholson said to Tom Cruise, “*You can’t handle the truth?*” Can you handle the truth? Don’t run away when it’s right in front of you. Pilate voiced the question on many minds today. Even though Jesus was standing right in front of Him, he queried in John 18:38: “***What is truth?***” He didn’t take the time to find out. Friend, you will find what you’re looking for in Christ as John 8:32 declares: “***And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.***”

**3. Jesus is the life.** All through the gospel of John *life* describes the principle of spiritual vitality. Just as spiritual death leads to separation from God, so life implies communion with Him. We are dead without Him. We become alive when we surrender ourselves to Him. John 5:24: “***Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.***”

I like what Albert Mohler writes: “*If all we need is a teacher of enlightenment, the Buddha will do. If all we need is a collection of gods for every occasion...Hinduism will do. If all we need is a tribal deity, then any tribal deity will do. If all we need is a lawgiver, Moses will do. If all we need is a set of rules and a way of devotion, Muhammad or Joseph Smith will do. If all we need is inspiration and insight into the sovereign self...Oprah will do. But if we need a Savior, only Jesus will do.*”

## Application

I can think of three ways we can put this powerful passage into practice.

**1. Place your faith in Jesus.** He is the only way! Look again at the last part of verse 6: “***...No one comes to the Father except through me.***” That little word

“except” means that apart from Jesus there is no way to be saved. You cannot get there by trusting yourself. And you cannot come to the Father by jumping through any religious hoops either. The only way to come is to go through Jesus, the way, the truth and the life. 1 Peter 3:18: “***For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.***” Are you ready to do that right now?

Go back to verse 1 where Jesus says, “***Believe in me.***” The word “***believe***” is an imperative. And to believe means to rely on and trust in Him.

Jesus is the way that must be followed; He is the truth that must be believed; and He is the life that must be lived. Be like Thomas and ask your questions and then when you find what you’re looking for, cry out like he did in John 20:28: “***My Lord and my God!***” Can you say the same thing?

A couple weeks ago a young mother here at Edgewood entered through the door of salvation. That same week a Muslim woman in our community received Jesus as the way. This past Wednesday a woman on the phone told me she needs to get saved. What about you?

**2. Tell others about Jesus.** Brothers and sisters, we don’t have to make Jesus more palatable to people. He is truth and can stand up to thorough investigation. Our job is to tell others about Him, without caving into the culture or watering down the way to heaven.

The truth that Jesus is the only way should make us bold...and it should also break us. We must hold to this tough truth...but it should tenderize us and put tears in our eyes about the fate of the lost. Instead of holding it over someone’s head as a hammer, we must help people believe and receive. This truth is the most loving truth ever given by God.

I was so moved last week when one of our Life Groups met a refugee family from Thailand at the airport. They furnished an apartment for them and are now helping them get acclimated to the community. Why are they doing all this? Ultimately its because they want to help this family understand that Jesus is the only way.

You can hear this I AM statement from Jesus and conclude that it is bigoted or beautiful, limited or loving, intolerant or invitational.

If Jesus is truly the only way, the unkindest thing would be keep it to ourselves. If Jesus is truly the only way, the most loving thing is to share it with others.

We have an opportunity Easter weekend to invite people to one of 5 different services. We're offering all these service times so our guests will have a number of options to choose from. Last Easter 1700 people attended four services. We're hoping for even more this year. But that depends in large part on each of us asking someone to join us. Will you make the ask, even if it feels awkward?

→ Play Video: “Awkward Invitation”

Here's how I see it. It's awkward to ask people to come to a service but it will be even more awkward if we don't. We have invite cards to make it easier for you.

**3. Stand up for truth no matter how hard it will be.** One pastor puts it like this: “*To say less than Jesus said is to be disloyal to Him. To say something contrary to what He said is to be disobedient to Him.*”

The truth of John 14:6 answers three key questions that everyone has.

- How can I be saved? *He is the way!*
- How can I be sure? *He is the truth!*
- How can I be satisfied? *He is the life!*

Do you believe this? Before you answer too quickly, settle the fact that you will be called intolerant, narrow-minded, bigoted, arrogant and even hateful. You will be offensive to a pluralistic, all-roads-lead-to-heaven culture.

Be bold about Jesus...with a smile on your face. If people reject us, let it not be because of our rudeness. Don't lose your cool...speaking the truth in love is always the best rule. Listen. The exclusive truth claims of Jesus do not mean that we should demonstrate an exclusive spirit. Ravi Zacharias captures this well when he writes: “*Without the undergirding of love, the possessor of any conviction becomes obnoxious, and the dogma believed becomes repulsive to the one who disagrees with it. The early church also lived in an intensely pluralistic culture in which it had to deliver an exclusivistic message, but the believers were distinguished and recognized by their love...being possessed of a*

*conviction is a necessary part of following God, but doing so with love and patience are necessary handmaidens.” (“Deliver Us From Evil,” p. 83).*

In order to help you stand “out there” I wonder if you’re ready to stand “in here” as an expression of your belief today? Please stand if you are ready to make this statement: *Since I believe the Bible, I must say that Jesus is the only way.*