

The Basics of Christianity

What Makes Christianity Unique?

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

INTRODUCTION:

1 Corinthians 15:12-19 (NASB1995)

BODY:

I. Why We Do Good Works.

Matthew 22:36-37 (NASB1995)

Ephesians 2:8-10 (NASB1995)

II. Our Relationship with God.

Romans 5:12 (NASB1995)

Philippians 2:6-11 (NASB1995)

Hebrews 9:12 (NASB1995)

Hebrews 7:25 (NASB1995)

Romans 8:16-17(1995)

Ephesians 1:22-23 (NASB1995)

III. The Source of Our Information.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB1995)

2 Peter 1:20-21 (NASB1995)

Matthew 5:17-18 (NASB1995)

IV. The Death of Jesus on the Cross.

Galatians 3:13-14 (NASB1995)

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (NASB1995)

V. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

1 Corinthians 15:15-17 (NASB1995)

John 14:6 (NASB1995)

CONCLUSION:

1 Peter 3:15-16 (NASB1995)

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (NASB1995)

The Basics of Christianity

What Makes Christianity Unique?

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

INTRODUCTION:

Is Christianity really unique, or is it just one of many roads on the path to Truth?

Is Christianity truly unique among the many religions around the world?

If it is, what makes it so?

Unique among all religions, Christianity makes several claims that others do not.

First, all other religions exhort man to reach up to God and grasp hold of Him through their own **works**. Christianity is the only religion where God reaches down to man.

Second, other religions are systems of do's and don'ts to appease their God; whereas Christianity is a **relationship** with God.

Third, Christianity looks to the Bible as the singular source of **Truth**.

Finally, Christianity is based upon truly the most amazing event in all of human history—the **death**, burial, and **resurrection** of Jesus Christ which Old Testament Prophets and Jesus Himself foretold would happen.

All Stand and Read Scripture

1 Corinthians 15:12-19 (NASB1995)

¹² Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised; ¹⁴ and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, your faith also is in vain. ¹⁵ Moreover, we are even found *to be* false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, then not even Christ has been raised; ¹⁷ and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If we have hoped in Christ only in this life, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Prayer

BODY:

I. Why We Do Good Works.

Other forms of religion subscribe to a system of works—those things we should do and those we should avoid—which will make us “good enough” to please God and merit His favor. Christianity, on the other hand, is based on the biblical principle that we can never be good enough to be in the presence of a perfect, holy God. The Mosaic Law was given to mankind to prove to us that we cannot keep it. Thus it became a "tutor" to lead us to Christ.

The impossibility of keeping the Law is revealed in what Jesus called the “first and greatest commandment”.

Matthew 22:36-37 (NASB1995)

³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ And He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’

This would mean loving God with every fiber of our being 24/7, with never a thought for ourselves. This is an impossible task for anyone in this world of sin. But rather than condemning us as law-breakers and leaving it at that, God provided a substitute—Jesus Christ—who obeyed the Law perfectly for us. By faith in Him and accepting His work on our behalf, we are justified and made righteous. Here is the crucial difference between Christianity and all other religions.

Ephesians 2:8-10 (NASB1995)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is the gift of God*; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

The two most common ingredients in religions are rules and rituals. Some religions are essentially nothing more than a list of rules, do’s and don’ts, that a person must observe in order to be considered a faithful adherent of that religion, and thereby, right with the God of that religion. Two examples of rules-based religions are Islam and Judaism. Islam has its five pillars that must be observed. Judaism has hundreds of commands and traditions that are to be observed. Both religions, to a certain degree, claim that by obeying the rules of the religion, a person will be considered right with God.

Other religions focus more on observing rituals. If the rituals are followed properly, God will accept such a person into Heaven after death. Buddhism and Hinduism are also primarily ritual-based religions, but can also to a lesser degree be considered rules-based.

It is true that both Christianity and other religions have rules and rituals. But there is a crucial difference between the two. **In Christianity the rules and rituals are observed out of gratitude for the salvation God has provided instead of an effort to obtain that salvation!** All other religions are doing things (rules and rituals) in order to try to earn God’s favor.

II. Our Relationship with God.

As to the second point, Christianity is not a religious system, but a relationship with God, one that He initiated and maintains. Christians believe that mankind was created specifically to have a relationship with God, but sin separates all men from Him.

Romans 5:12 (NASB1995)

¹² Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—

Christianity teaches that Jesus Christ walked this earth, fully God, and yet fully man and died on the cross to restore the relationship that was broken by sin.

Philippians 2:6-11 (NASB1995)

⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This intimate relationship was made possible when Jesus died on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

Hebrews 9:12 (NASB1995)

¹² and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

After His death on the cross, Christ was buried, He rose again, and now lives at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for believers forever.

Hebrews 7:25 (NASB1995)

²⁵ Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

The intimacy of this relationship is revealed in two ways. As a believer, we are no longer seen as law-breakers, we have been adopted into God's own family as His children.

Romans 8:16-17(1995)

¹⁶ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.

Even more intimately, believers are the very "body of Christ" of which He is the head having been purchased by His blood.

Ephesians 1:22-23 (NASB1995)

²² And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, ²³ **which is His body**, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

No other religion makes assertions that even begin to approximate this incredible truth.

III. The Source of Our Information.

Another thing that makes Christianity unique is its source of information. All religions have some sort of basis of information that outlines its beliefs and practices, but none have one source of information that makes the claims Christianity does about the Bible—it is the written Word of God, and it is infallible and inerrant and all that is necessary for faith and practice.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB1995)

¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Christians believe that the Bible is the inspired—literally “God-breathed”—Word of God and that its teaching is the final authority .

2 Peter 1:20-21 (NASB1995)

²⁰ But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one’s own interpretation, ²¹ for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

This verse helps us to understand that even though God used men with their distinctive personalities and writing styles, He divinely inspired the very words they wrote.

Some would argue that the Old Testament made rules that were to be followed and the New Testament does not make the same requirements thus the Bible is not consistent in its teachings.

What we must understand is that we entered into a new covenant that changed many things when Jesus died on the cross. This is what Jesus Himself said concerning the law.

Matthew 5:17-18 (NASB1995)

¹⁷ “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

In these verses, Jesus is reinforcing the accuracy of the Scriptures down to the smallest detail and the slightest punctuation mark, because it is the very Word of God.

Though there are other religions that use prophecy, none are 100% accurate, as are those in the Bible, and none of them point to someone like Jesus who fulfilled all of the prophecies from the Old Testament concerning Him, made incredible claims, and performed incredible miracles.

It is not just the parts of the Bible that deal with religious doctrines that are inspired, but each and every word from Genesis to Revelation. Since it is inspired by God, the Scriptures are therefore authoritative when it comes to establishing doctrine, and sufficient for teaching man how to be in a right relationship with God. The Bible claims not only to be inspired by God, but also to have the supernatural ability to change us and make us “complete.” What more can we need?

IV. The Death of Jesus on the Cross.

It was the death of Jesus on the cross that provided our salvation. In His death, Jesus took upon Himself the curse introduced by Adam.

Galatians 3:13-14 (NASB1995)

¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”— ¹⁴ in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

The cross of Christ won for us the victory that we could never have won for ourselves. We all have sinned and there is nothing that we can do to remove that sin from us. On the cross God piled our sins on Jesus, and He bore the punishment that we deserved.

Without the sacrificial death of Christ, we would still be in our sins, unforgiven, unredeemed, unsaved, and unloved. The cross of Christ is vital to our salvation.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (NASB1995)

³ For I handed down to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

V. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

The story of Jesus Christ did not end with His death. The resurrection of Christ is also foundational to the gospel message because it is the verification that what Jesus taught and accomplished was true and approved by God. Our salvation stands or falls based on the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, as or scripture text made clear.

1 Corinthians 15:15-17 (NASB1995)

¹⁵ Moreover, we are even found *to be* false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, then not even Christ has been raised; ¹⁷ and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

It was Jesus' resurrection that changed the lives of the disciples. After Jesus was crucified, the disciples ran and hid. But when they saw the risen Lord, they knew that all Jesus had said and done proved that He was indeed God in flesh. No other religious leader has died in full view of trained executioners, had a guarded tomb, and then rose three days later to appear before many people. The resurrection is proof of who Jesus is and that He did accomplish what He set out to do: **provide the only means of redemption for mankind.**

Buddha did not rise from the dead. Muhammad did not rise from the dead. Confucius did not rise from the dead. Krishna did not rise from the dead. Only Jesus has physically risen from the dead, walked on water, claimed to be God, and raised others from the dead. He has conquered death. Only in Christianity do we have the person of Christ who claimed to be God, performed many miracles to prove His claim of divinity, died and rose from the dead, and claimed that He alone is “the way the truth and the life” and that no one comes to the Father except through Him.

John 14:6 (NASB1995)

⁶ Jesus *said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

This is a very incredible statement. Jesus is, in essence saying that Christianity is uniquely true. So, **if Jesus is correct**, then any belief system that conflicts with Christianity is wrong. How could a mere man be the truth? He could not be, unless He was more than a man, which is actually what He claimed to be. The fact is, Jesus' claim was validated when He rose from the dead.

A Christian has accepted Truth, not just as a concept, but as a Person.

Why is it so important to understand and embrace the concept of absolute truth in all areas of life (including faith and religion)? Simply because life has consequences for being wrong. Boarding the wrong plane will take you where you do not wish to go despite your sincere belief that you will arrive at your intended destination. Nowhere are the consequences more important than in the area of faith and religion. Eternity is an awfully long time to be wrong.

CONCLUSION:

Everyone should agree that the only reason to believe something is because it is true—nothing more. Sadly, true belief is a matter of the will, and no matter how much logical evidence is presented, some will still choose to deny the God who is there and miss the one true path to Him.

We must hold fast to the Truth while showing compassion to those who question it.

1 Peter 3:15-16 (NASB1995)

¹⁵ but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; ¹⁶ and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

In summary, absolute truth exists, as no other option is adequate. Many systems of "truth" or morality exist, yet only Jesus Christ claimed to be truth and proved it by His resurrection from the dead.

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (NASB1995)

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; ⁷ then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; ⁸ and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

Our faith is not a blind faith. It is a verifiable faith.

He Is Lord!