

What About People Who Have Never Heard of Jesus?

Message 5 of 5 in the series: "Apologetics: The Defense of Christianity Through Rational Argument"

A. It's important for us, as Christians, to be able to explain what we believe and why we believe it.

"...you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, **always be ready to explain it.** But do this in a gentle and respectful way." 1 Peter 3:15-16a (NLT)

IMPORTANT! People can't believe in Jesus unless someone tells them the Good News. "For 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And **how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?** And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, 'How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!'" Romans 10:13-15 (NLT)

B. What about people who have never heard of Jesus?

1. God is righteous, patient, just, and kind. He does NOT want people to go to hell. He wants all people, everywhere, to repent of their sins and seek a personal relationship with Him.

"As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of wicked people. **I only want them to turn from their wicked ways so they can live.**" Ezekiel 33:11a (NLT)

"Don't you see how wonderfully **kind, tolerant, and patient God is** with you? Does this mean nothing to you? **Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?** But because you are stubborn and refuse to turn from your sin, you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself. For a day of anger is coming, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed." Romans 2:4-5 (NLT)

"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead **he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**" 2 Peter 3:9 (NIV)

2. From the evidence of His creation, all people, everywhere, can know that God exists.

"They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. **Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature.** So they have no excuse for not knowing God." Romans 1:19-20 (NLT)

"**The heavens declare the glory of God;** the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet **their voice goes out into all the earth,** their words to the ends of the world." Psalm 19:1-4a (NIV)

"**Only fools** say in their hearts, 'There is no God.'" Psalm 14:1 (NLT)

3. No one will be condemned by God for what they don't know. The entire human race is sinful and fallen and deserves God's judgment for violating the moral standards we do know.

"**There is no one righteous, not even one;** there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; **there is no one who does good, not even one.**" Romans 3:10b-12 (NIV) (*Psalm 14:1-3*)

"All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, **even though they do not have the law. They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness,** and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.) This will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares." Romans 2:12-16 (NIV)

4. Anyone who seeks to know God with all his/her heart will find Him.

"You will seek me and find me **when you seek me with all your heart.**" Jeremiah 29:13 (NIV)

“Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. **For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.**” Matthew 7:7-8 (NLT)

“Cornelius replied, ‘Four days ago I was praying in my house about this same time, three o’clock in the afternoon. Suddenly, a man in dazzling clothes was standing in front of me. He told me, “**Cornelius, your prayer has been heard**, and your gifts to the poor have been noticed by God! Now send messengers to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. He is staying in the home of Simon, a tanner who lives near the seashore.” So I sent for you at once, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here, waiting before God to hear the message the Lord has given you.’” Acts 10:30-33 (NLT)

5. Not everyone wants to hear the Good News about Jesus.

“**But not everyone welcomes the Good News**, for Isaiah the prophet said, ‘Lord, who has believed our message?’” Romans 10:16 (NLT) (*Isaiah 53:1*)

“Finally, dear brothers and sisters, we ask you to pray for us. Pray that the Lord’s message will spread rapidly and be honored wherever it goes, just as when it came to you. **Pray, too, that we will be rescued from wicked and evil people, for not everyone is a believer.**” 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2 (NLT)

“There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God’s one and only Son. And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. **All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed.**”
John 3:18-20 (NLT)

C. Jesus wants my name to be a witness for Him and to be genuinely concerned that everyone, everywhere, hears the Good News.

“Therefore, **go and make disciples of all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” Matthew 28:19 (NLT)

“Go into all the world and **preach the Good News to everyone.**” Mark 16:15b (NLT)

“Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day. It was also written that **this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations**, beginning in Jerusalem: ‘There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.’” Luke 24:46b-47 (NLT)

“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, **so I am sending you.**” John 20:21b (NLT)

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And **you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere**—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
Acts 1:8 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! We are the current generation of disciples! “I am praying not only for these disciples but also for **all who will ever believe in me through their message.**” John 17:20 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! Our motive for telling as many people as we can about Jesus is His great love. “For Christ’s love compels us...” 2 Corinthians 5:14a (NIV)

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Connect Group Questions:

1. What do the following passages teach us about God’s desire for people to know Him? (Jeremiah 24:7, Hosea 6:6, Habakkuk 2:14)
2. How important to Jesus was telling everyone, everywhere, the Good News? (Matthew 29:19-20, Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24:46-47, John 20:21, Acts 1:8)
3. Why do you think Jesus entrusted the spread of the Good News to people like us? (Romans 10:13-15, 1 Peter 3:15-16)
4. Discuss the following statements regarding people who have never heard of Jesus:
 - God is righteous, just, patient, and kind. He does NOT want people to go to hell. He wants all people, everywhere, to repent of their sins and seek a personal relationship with Him. (Ezekiel 33:11, Romans 2:4-5, 2 Peter 3:9)

- From the evidence of His creation, all people, everywhere, can know that God exists. (Romans 1:19-20, Psalm 19:1-4, Psalm 14:1)
 - No one will be condemned by God for what they don't know. The entire human race is sinful and fallen and deserves God's judgment for violating the moral standards we do know. (Romans 2:12-16 & 3:10-12, Psalm 14:1-3)
 - Anyone who seeks to know God with all his/her heart will find Him. (Jeremiah 29:13, Matthew 7:7-8, Acts 10:30-33)
 - Not everyone wants to hear the Good News about Jesus. (Romans 10:16, Isaiah 53:1, 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2, John 3:18-20)
5. Read 2 Corinthians 5:14. What does it look like when the love of Christ compels us to tell others about Jesus?
6. Discuss the following quotations:

"If you are worried about the people outside, the most unreasonable thing you can do is remain outside yourself. Christians are Christ's body, the organism through which He works. Every addition to that body enables Him to do more. If you want to help those outside you must add your own little cell to the body of Christ who alone can help them. Cutting off a man's fingers would be an odd way of getting him to do more work." C.S. Lewis

"Evangelism is not a professional job for a few trained men but is instead the unrelenting responsibility of every person who belongs to the company of Jesus." Elton Trueblood