

Is Christianity the Only True Religion?

By John D. Wilsey

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read the comments related to 1 Corinthians 15:3–8 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: How did Paul come to know the gospel?

Assignment Two

Read the comments related to 1 Corinthians 15:21 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What logical progression do you see explained?

Assignment Three

Read the comments related to Isaiah 59:1–2, 15–20 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: How did God deal with the situation?

Scripture to Memorize

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 1 Corinthians 15:22

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will be able to explain why Christianity is the only true faith system.

John D. Wilsey is assistant professor of History and Christian Apologetics at Southwestern Seminary. He is author of *American Exceptionalism and Civil Religion: Reassessing the History of an Idea* (IVP Academic, 2015) and *One Nation under God: An Evangelical Critique of Christian America* (Pickwick, 2011). He is editing an abridged edition of Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* for Lexham Press for release in 2016. He blogs at www.johndwilsey.com. John thrives in a romantic relationship with his wife, and together they are raising two dear children.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Imagine you have a neighbor who is Muslim. You have gotten to know your neighbor and have come to understand and respect his faith system, but it occurs to you that he believes his faith is true just as much as you believe your faith is true. How do you know Christianity is the only true belief system?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:3–8 and 20–23 out loud.

Studying the Passage

The gospel of Christ is a message handed down and received from person to person, generation to generation. The message originated in the mind of God, and God revealed it to human beings. Paul is part of a long line of generations who received the gospel, which originated with God, and he is passing it down to His hearers. The gospel is not the invention of any man, but a mystery revealed to humankind by God through His servants.

Verse 3. Christ died for our sins. This is the most unique claim of any faith system in existence. **in accordance with the Scriptures.** Christ's death for our sins was not something that just happened out of nowhere. His work on the cross was foretold in the Old Testament, and He fulfilled what was foretold.

Verse 4. He was buried. The fact that Christ was buried is important to the Christian testimony. His burial demonstrates that He really did, in fact, die. **He was raised on the third day.** Christ's resurrection is measured in time and space—it was on the third day. This fact was also foretold in the Scriptures. Neither His death nor His resurrection was an afterthought.

Verse 5. He appeared. This was a real resurrection verified by several named eyewitnesses.

Verses 6–7. He appeared to more. Christ's appearances were not for those in His immediate circle alone, but to several hundred different people. Thus, the resurrection account is not based on a group lie among the disciples. Hundreds of people had seen Him, and those who were still living were prepared to say so.

Verse 8. He appeared also to me. Christ even appeared to one who had been an enemy of His. Christ did not only appear to His friends, He appeared to those who were opposed to Him.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now share an answer to the following question: How did Paul come to know the gospel?

Discussion Question

What hard evidence exists that validates the claims found in 1 Corinthians 15 regarding Christ's death and resurrection? What is the benefit of eyewitness testimony to an alleged event?

On Your Own

Read Luke 24:36–43. What physical evidence is recorded in this passage that proves Jesus rose from the dead? Write your answers in the space below.

Studying the Passage

Verse 20. the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. “Those who have fallen asleep” is a nice way to say “those who have died.” This is a common euphemism used in the New Testament. Jesus even used it on occasion (see John 11, for example). This verse is saying that Jesus is the first in a line of people who are, or who will be, resurrected. Christ is the first, leading the way into heaven. We who believe in Christ follow Him as He led the way.

Verse 21. by a man has come. Notice the logical progression from Genesis 3 to Christ that Paul is noting here. Just as sin entered the world through one person, by one Person resurrection from the dead is offered to all persons.

Verse 22. in Adam all die . . . in Christ shall all be made alive. With sin came death. Death is separation from God. Through Christ comes life, because Christ resolves the separation by reconciling us to God. There is no other way for that reconciliation to take place apart from the work of Christ in His death and resurrection.

Verse 23. each in his own order. In other words, Christ is the firstfruits. After Christ come those who are His. Those who are not His will not be reconciled to God and, thus, will not have life. They will continue in a state of separation from God and, thus, be subject to death.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now share an answer to the following question: What logical progression do you see explained in 1 Corinthians 15:21?

According to the Scriptures

Read Isaiah 59:1–2 and 15–20 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 2. your iniquities have made a separation. This passage describes in stark terms the human condition since the fall in the garden of Eden. Sin results in death, or separation from God.

Verse 15b. The LORD saw it, and it displeased Him. God looked at the human state of affairs and He was personally and negatively affected by it. In other words, He cared.

Verse 16. He saw that there was no man. From God’s perspective (the only true perspective), no one could do anything to remedy the situation. With regard to humankind, all hope of remedying the human condition in sin was lost. **Then His own.** When God saw that no human could intercede for the rest of humanity, He came down and did what was necessary to correct the situation.

Verse 17. He put on. Here we see the imagery Paul used in Ephesians 6.

Verse 19. He will come. God came down to save human beings in order to bring glory to His name. He will not share His glory with anyone else (see Isaiah 48:11).

Verse 20. A Redeemer will come to Zion. Christ is the Redeemer prophesied in Scripture, which Paul notes in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4. Those who are saved come to Christ for their

salvation and no one else. When they come to Him for salvation, they come to Him on His terms and not on anyone else's. Therefore, the Christian faith is the only true faith system.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share an answer to the following question: How did God deal with the situation presented in Isaiah 59:1–2 and 15–20?

Discussion Question

What does Christ mean when He says the Scriptures testify about Him in John 5:39?

On Your Own

Look up Ephesians 4:14–18. How does the unity of the Scriptures answer the question of the sole truth of Christianity? Write your answers in the space below.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** at the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

At Home: Nail It Down

When thinking about the question, “Is Christianity the only true religion?”, ask yourself four questions about this faith and its claims.

1. Is the faith system rational?

- In other words, does it make sense? Does it contradict itself in its fundamental claims? Does it violate the laws of logic? Does it use and appeal to reason, or are its claims merely mystical or based only on experiences?
- Christianity is reasonable because it affirms that reason comes from God, who is rational. Furthermore, reason comes before nature. Therefore, the human mind can know truth because humans are made in the image of God, the source of all reason.

2. Is the faith system empirically adequate?

- In other words, is there evidence to support its fact claims?
- There is ample historical evidence supporting the death of Christ and His resurrection.

3. Does the faith system have explanatory power?

- In other words, does the faith explain the things it affirms?
- Christianity explains the nature of God, the nature of man, the problems that come with sin, and how God has resolved those problems.

4. Is the faith system practical?

- In other words, can that faith be lived out?
- Disciples of Christ have been daily living out their faith for two thousand years.

We can ask these questions of Christianity, and we should also ask these questions of every faith system. When we do, we see that Christianity can endure scrutiny, while other claims to truth cannot.

Follow up Question

What are your reasons for believing Christianity is the only true religion?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.