

“Is Christianity Too Narrow?”

In our culture, personal freedom is a high value. Truth claims are often devalued because they are viewed as freedom-killers. How can Christianity narrowly say they are the only true religion when there are so many other options?

It is remarkable how many conflicts Jesus found himself in because of his truth claims. We read in the Gospels of the New Testament that he regularly asserted that God was real and the pathway to knowing Him was unique. Jesus said, *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).*

Before you read this week’s text, ask: *“Is there one God? Is there a unique way to know God? How do you know?”*

John 18:33-38

³³ So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” ³⁴ Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?” ³⁵ Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?” ³⁶ Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting,

that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” ³⁷ Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” ³⁸ Pilate said to him, “What is truth?”

1. Is there one God? Is there a unique way to know God? How do you know?
2. Who was Pilate (33)?
3. What is the setting and purpose of this exchange between Pilate and Jesus (33)?
4. In this brief passage, John contrasts Pilate’s material power with Jesus’ supernatural power. When Pilate wonders if Jesus is “King of the Jews”, what exactly is he trying to understand (33,37)?
5. When Jesus speaks of His “kingdom”, what does He mean (36)? Read Daniel 7:14 to gain further insight into what Jesus means by the use of the word “kingdom”.
6. What is Jesus’ purpose according to this passage (37)? What does Jesus mean when He speaks of “the truth” (37)? Read John 1:14 & 14:6 to gain further insight into Jesus use of the word “truth”.
7. Why did Jesus say that everyone who is of the truth listens to His voice (37)? How does one go about doing this?
8. What is Pilate’s intention when he asks Jesus, “What is truth?” (38)
9. What is truth?

Going A Step Further...

- At WEPC, we begin each worship service with a Scripture reading. We do this because we believe that God Himself has brought us together and He always has the first word in our meeting. **Read this week's Call to Worship** from [Psalm 86:9-12](#). This passage helps us answer the question, "Which God are we worshipping?" What do these verses tell us about God? What do they teach us about worship? Take time to pray together in light of this passage.
- Each week in worship confess our sins and then hear a Scripture verse that encourages us with the Good News that Jesus loves and forgives sinners. **This week's Words of Encouragement** came from [1 John 1:5-7](#). It is important to note that they were written by John, the same apostle who recorded Pilate's question, "What is truth?". In this passage, John teaches the church how to *practice* God's truth. What does it mean to "walk in darkness"? What does it mean to "walk in the light"?
- As a part of worship [we sing songs and hymns](#) that further **amplify each Sunday's message**. This week, we sang and adaptation of Frederick Faber's beautiful hymn, "[There's a Wideness in God's Mercy](#)", written as a reflection on the sufficiency of Jesus Christ. In this song, Faber lists the many ways that God's grace is greater than our sin (cf. Romans 5:20), and the worshipper is stirred to trust Jesus for every need. What do you need Jesus to do in your life these days? Pray for one another and thank God that Jesus Christ is sufficient.

Questions about this week's study guide? Contact Kevin Greene, kevin@wepc.org
To hear sermons and access past study guides visit www.wepc.org/archivedsermons

Sermon Notes

This week, Steve Shelby preached on John 18:33-38

- What is Truth?
- Jesus says here that He came into the world to bear witness to the truth.
- If there is truth, then it seems like there should be something(s) that are not true.
- Is Christianity, Jesus, too narrow? What about the thought that all roads lead to God?
- Certainly God is big enough.....
- While this seems gracious and warm and friendly, is it?
- "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 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? 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. And you know the way to where I am going.' Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also.[d] From now on you do know him and have seen him'. Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.
- Jesus makes clear here that he is the way the truth and the life and that no one comes to the Father except through him."
- Note the context: Not only is Jesus the way, but He extends a costly invitation to come, to enter into that way.
- "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live." (Isaiah 55)
- "And the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' And he said to me, 'These are the true words of God.'" (Revelation 19:9)
- While the way maybe narrow, it is big with mercy.
- It is big with grace.
- It is costly and wonderful.