

Patrick Morley: Is Christianity For You?

What would you guess will be the one question most on the minds of church visitors this Easter, Christmas, or for that matter, on any Sunday? My guess is they will want to know, "Is Christianity for me?"

So I've written a book to give voice to the honest doubts and questions many people have about the Christian faith. The approach is, "Don't take my word for it. Here's the evidence. Decide for yourself."

Let me introduce you to three excerpts from this new book...

The Purpose of This Book (from Chapter 1)

One of my seminary professors told a story about a man out for a hike on a cold, winter day. He came to a river that appeared to be frozen over. But since he was unfamiliar with the area, he didn't know how thick the ice was. Naturally, he was afraid that if he walked out he might fall through. So he got down on his stomach and slowly began to inch his way out onto the ice.

When he had crawled near the middle of the river, the air began to tremble as he heard a rumbling sound draw closer and closer. Suddenly a wagon with four horses at a full gallop shot over the crest of the riverbank, thundered across the river, and then disappeared over the ridge on the other side. You can imagine how foolish he felt.

It's difficult to trust something we don't know much about, isn't it? The man lying on the ice had difficulty trusting the ice because he didn't know much about the river.

But it isn't odd he felt that way. What would have been odd is if he had walked up to an unfamiliar frozen river and confidently stepped out on it.

Frankly, a lot of people feel this same lack of confidence about what they believe—and they don't like it one bit. You may be one of them. But at the same time, a lot of genuine, sincere people have honest doubts and questions about Christianity.

The purpose of this book is to help you answer the questions, "Is Christianity for me?" and "Can I examine Christianity rationally and determine whether it is a belief system that is true?" I believe the answer to both of these questions is "Yes."

You will find nothing new or novel in these pages. Everything I'll say comes directly out of the tradition of classic, historic, orthodox Christianity. It is intended to give you the feeling of a solid mass across which you can safely walk—not thin ice.

How to Become a Christian (from Chapter 9)

Would you like to become a Christian? Or if you have previously received Jesus but, for whatever reasons, have not been walking with Him, would you like to reaffirm your faith?

If so, how can you do that?

It's As Simple As a Story

Becoming a Christian is about making a change, but it's not a change that takes place by someone like me telling you how you should live. Likewise, it's not a change you can make by "willing" yourself to be "good." We've all tried that and failed, haven't we?

Instead, becoming a Christian is about understanding and embracing the story of Jesus—who He is, why He came, and what it means to believe in Him. Noted theologian J. Gresham Machen put it this way:

"The strange thing about Christianity was that it adopted an entirely different method. It transformed the lives of men not

by appealing to the human will, but by telling a story; not by exhortation, but by the narration of an event.

It is no wonder that such a method seemed strange. Could anything be more impractical than the attempt to influence conduct by rehearsing events concerning the death of a religious teacher?

But the strange thing is that it works. ...Where the most eloquent exhortation fails, the simple story of an event succeeds; the lives of men are transformed by a piece of news."

Dealing with Regrets, Doubts, and Uncertainty

"But I have regrets, feel unworthy and still have doubts," you say. That's okay. You don't need to pretend you don't have doubts. Doubts are normal. There was a man in the Bible who said to Jesus, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24, NLT). And Jesus did help him. Faith need not be big to get started. It can be small, like a mustard seed. It will grow over time. Cru founder, Bill Bright, often said, "Faith is like a muscle. The more you use it, the bigger it gets."

You might say, "But I did give Christianity a try and it didn't take." Often, people try to follow a God of their own design. But you can't put conditions on God, such as, "I'll believe if you save my marriage." Nor can you expect something in return, such as, "I will believe if God will bless me financially." And you can't give God less than first place, such as, "I will make time for God as soon as I build my career." These are not examples of "giving Christianity a try and it not taking." These are examples of trying something else. Professor and author Ron Nash said, "I have no problem if people want to make up a new religion. I just wish they wouldn't call it Christianity." Christianity can't be what you want it to be; it has to be what it is.

"I did try, and it was too hard." You may have been told,

“Just pray this prayer and God will bless you.” God *will* bless you, but whoever told you that left out hard things like repentance, good deeds, and even suffering. The apostle Paul said, “I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds” (see Acts 26:20). The apostle Peter noted, “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed” (1 Pet. 4:12-13). As English writer G. K. Chesterton said, “Christianity has not so much been tried and found wanting, as it has been found difficult and left untried.”

“It’s too late for me. I had my chance.” It’s never too late. God loves you very much. No matter what you’ve done, you can be forgiven. Jesus told a parable about this in Matthew 20. A man hired people throughout the day to work in his field. At the end of the day, those who only worked a short time were paid the same as those who had worked all day. The reward is the same for all who decide to follow Christ, no matter how late you start following Him.

Giving Christianity a Try

Would it make sense for your daughter to say, “I could never ride a bike,” when she had never given it a try?

Or, suppose a boy at a school party wanted to ask a girl to dance. But he didn’t ask because he thought, *She would never want to dance with me*. Would it be right for him to now dislike her for not doing what he never asked?

Or, if a doctor prescribed a medicine for your illness and you didn’t take it, would be fair to say, “That medicine doesn’t work”?

Or, should someone who refuses to ask for directions be irritated with the mapmaker when they arrive at the wrong

destination?

It just doesn't make sense to reject something you've never tried. In the same way it wouldn't be fair to reject Christianity because you never tried it.

So are you ready to give it a try?

Note: This article contains excerpts from Pat's new book, Is Christianity For You? Give visitors to your church a copy this Easter—available in cases for less than one dollar each. Download a free review copy at .

Pat Morley is the Founder and CEO of Man in the Mirror. After building one of Florida's 100 largest privately held companies, in 1991, he founded Man in the Mirror, a non-profit organization to help men find meaning and purpose in life. Dr. Morley is the bestselling author of The Man in the Mirror, No Man Left Behind, Dad in the Mirror, and A Man's Guide to the Spiritual Disciplines.