

The Kindest Thing You Can Do for Unbelievers

Social media are a strange sort of animal. In a 30-second scroll of my news feed, I might see recipes, laugh-out-loud memes, goofy selfies from my teenage sister, the latest happenings in the church youth group and prayer requests of every kind.

Increasingly, our feeds are littered with the latest in a reel of scary headlines detailing death, destruction, and terror. At once we've gone from the ridiculous to the sublime. As worldviews clash around us and our faith is questioned in every arena, believers are faced with a daunting question: How then shall we respond, if we are to respond at all?

When Opportunity Knocks

A few weeks ago, I was met with that opportunity during an exchange with a friend regarding the news headline "God Isn't Fixing This." In the midst of the conversation, she said this:

Laura, do you not realize that your god and [the Muslims'] god are the same one? Also the same as those of the Jewish faith. Action must be done to stop these senseless killings, not rambling to imaginary friends.

The response I intended to write was a burning, impassioned plea that would present, in stark contrast, the beauty of the living God I serve to the ugly, dead god of terror. But I wanted to do some research first, so I posed this question to my Facebook friends:

I am doing an extremely unscientific poll for something I'm in the process of writing. So here's the question:

Do Muslims, Jews, and Christians all worship the same god?

A. Yes, all three worship the same god.

B. No, each group worships a different god.

C. Christians and Jews worship the same god, but Muslims worship a different god.

D. I have no idea.

The answers were fascinating! Out of forty-one respondents:

- Eight people chose A.
- Eight selected B.
- Eighteen picked C.
- And there was one lone D (but only after the respondent first answered B, then A).
- Other responses included two “no’s”, one drop-jawed Emoji, and two friends who answered my question with a question.
- The A’s most frequently “liked” one another’s answers.
- B’s and C’s were most likely to answer with an addendum of “but” or “mostly.”
- More than half of the respondents felt the need to qualify their answer with an explanation instead of just choosing a letter.

“So what?” you might ask, “Where’s the story?”

My intrigue was in the hearts of those who responded: Younger people, older people, pastors, stay-at-home moms, teachers, missionaries, blue collar workers, white collar workers, Christians, non-Christians, liberals and conservatives. All these people looked a difficult question in the face and attempted to formulate a thoughtful response. It’s encouraging to me when my friends are willing to engage with their worldview and articulate their faith. But what about the motivation behind their answers? Here’s the thing: I truly believe that each response came from the heart of a person who

wants to be charitable and kind to their fellow man.

Would the True God Please Stand Up?

So what does it mean to be kind to our neighbor in this context? Those who said we all worship the same God believe they are being charitable by acknowledging the historicity of the claims of each religion being “Abrahamic” and by supporting their fellow man in pursuit of whichever path he or she chooses. Those who answered B (Christians and Jews same) and C (all different) believe they are being charitable by pointing their friends to whom they believe is the one true God and by offering gospel-saturated explanations. The “I have no idea” people? Perhaps they think they are being charitable by not engaging in debate on an issue that they feel can’t be known for certain.

The reality is this—the kindest thing you can do for another is to tell him or her the truth. As unkind as it may sound, Christians, Muslims and (non-messianic) Jews cannot all be right on this matter. Jesus said, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30), and “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). Today’s Jews say that Jesus was most certainly not God’s Son¹, and Muslims say that God never had a son (“He neither begets nor is born”²). These are three non-intersecting circles. We cannot all be right.

A Hope-Filled Truth

How grim, how cruel, how harsh that sounds! But there is no way around it. Winston Churchill is quoted as saying, “A lie gets around the world before the truth has a chance to put its pants on.” My believing friends, perhaps it’s time to start sleeping in our clothes.

Every day, even the “conservative” culture is bombarded with a

narrative that spoons us mouthfuls of non-biblical niceties. It tells us that people are basically good, that all religions are for the most part the same, and that if we could just get our politics right, we could stop this blood-soaked jihad once and for all. But it is not so, and we are called to feast on truth and to share its bounty with others:

The truth about the God of life—Who said not “You kill for me,” but “I’ll die for you” (Rom. 5:6).

The truth about a sure salvation—This is not a “good deeds versus bad deeds with a little jihad to seal the deal” gospel, but one that says, “I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13). Not think, not hope for the best, but ***know***.

The truth about the exclusivity of Christ—Kimberly Wagner has recently written about *The Audacious Exclusivity of the Gospel*, and she nailed it! Consider this as well: The Christian life is a relationship of lovely paradoxes. The sinless dies for the sinner; the King becomes a carpenter; in our weakness He is strong. The audacious gospel is at once completely exclusive yet absolutely available and perfectly free, for “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom. 10:13).

The Results Are In

Finally, to my friends who responded and to the readers here, if you’re wondering what my answer is, I should probably first admit that my question was limited in its helpfulness. Many of your answers might have differed if I had framed it from a historical perspective, if I had specified what I meant by “Jews” or if I had defined what I meant by “worship.”

The semantics and doctrinal truths that bear weight on the question and its possible answers have been debated by Bible scholars for eons, and no doubt that debate will continue. In

my limited research, though, I came across this helpful truth in an article by Joe Carter, who said this:

*“Here’s the statement that I recommend you chew on a little bit: GOD IS JESUS. When you see Jesus, you are seeing God, not just because **Jesus is God**, but also because **God is Jesus**. Jesus is the One who shows us who God is and what God is like³” (Emphasis added).*

So here it is:

A. God is Jesus.

B. God is Jesus.

C. God is Jesus.

D. God is Jesus.

And to my friend who sparked the conversation, take heart, because God has indeed “fixed this” (see A–D above). As I said before, you can call Him “imaginary” all day long, and I will continue to love you and pray for you. Oh, and one more thing, I will keep on winsomely telling truth to you and anyone else who will listen ... because I’m sleeping with my clothes on.

*Natives of Michigan’s beautiful Upper Peninsula, **Laura Elliott** and her husband, Michael, endeavor to serve the Lord with gladness in Minnesota as they raise five sons and one daughter, while ministering at Chisago Lakes Baptist Church and School, where Michael serves as the school’s administrator. Laura’s passions include words, music and encouraging women to pursue the God of Scripture in every season of life. In her so-called free time, you might find Laura cooking (or watching Food Network) at home in North Branch. Reprinted with permission from True Woman.*