

When Christianity Becomes High School

In episode 8 of my new series, *Questions With God*, I ask the question, “Why is there such a divide between Catholics and Protestants?” Growing up Protestant, I suppose it was only natural that I would occasionally encounter people who would bad-mouth Catholics and Catholicism. I never put up much of a fight for them, mostly because Catholicism always felt like a strange, alternative Christian universe that was shrouded in mystery. What I knew about Catholics was mostly from the movies, and all I saw there was cathedrals saturated in religious imagery, men in elaborate robes and what appeared to be smoke bombs hanging from chains. I had about as much in common with that stuff in a church service as I did the Goth kids at school. It was another world entirely.

Over the years, I would meet Catholics who helped give me a better understanding of what I considered some of the stranger aspects of Catholicism, and would help iron out some of the misconceptions I had as well. I find it fascinating how Protestants often run the gamut of opinions when it comes to Catholics—they’ll fall anywhere from “Catholics aren’t Christians and need to be saved,” to “Catholics are our brothers in Christ, with just a few ideological differences.”

Where you grew up and what kind of contact you’ve had with Catholicism will in large part decide where you fall on this pendulum.

We naturally fear what we don’t understand. When I posted a clip from *Adventures With God* of a time I took Todd White to the Vatican during my filming of my *Holy Ghost* films, I was shocked by the vitriol and anger found in many of the comments on YouTube. People were spewing anger at us, spouting off things like “new world order” and “one-world religion, no thank you”. They weren’t exactly the reasoned, love-filled

responses I was expecting. Then again, this was the comment section of YouTube, where angry and degenerate trolls often find solace in seeing who can shout the loudest.

But it did remind me that the divide between Catholics and Protestants is still very real and very wide. My good friend and pastor, Chad Norris, informed me that here in the South, where I now live, it would be almost unthinkable for most Protestant churches to invite a Catholic priest in to speak to their congregation. We may be okay to rub shoulders with others within Protestant party lines (within reason, of course); but good heavens, don't cross over to the "other" side if you know what's good for you. The whole thing feels somehow silly, short-sighted and reminds me a lot of high school.

Are there serious differences of theological opinion between Catholics and Protestants? Of course. Are some of these differences more than simply small, inconsequential ideologies that have little bearing on eternal matters? Of course. But should that mean we wall ourselves off from one another and choose secession, rather than openly and honestly trying to understand one another, realizing that at the end of the day, we *both* love and worship the one true God, Jesus Christ?