

# Dealing with Doubt in Our Christian Faith

*Dr. Michael Gleghorn points out that it is not having doubts about our Christian faith that is an issue, but rather how we respond to that doubt. Attacking this issue from a biblical worldview perspective, Michael helps us understand our doubts and respond to them as an informed Christian.*

## Help! My Doubts Scare Me!

Have you ever doubted your faith? We all have doubts from time to time. We may doubt that our boss *really* hit a hole-in-one at the golf course last weekend, or that our best friend *really* caught a fish as big as the one he claimed to catch, or that the strange looking guy on that late night TV show was *really* abducted by alien beings from a distant galaxy! Sometimes the things we doubt aren't really that important, but other times they are. And the more important something is to us, the more personally invested we are in it, the scarier it can be to start having doubts about it. So when Christians begin to have doubts about something as significant as the truth of their Christian faith, it's quite understandable that this might worry or even frighten them.



Reflecting on this issue in *The Case for Faith*, Lee Strobel wrote:

For many Christians, merely having doubts of any kind can be scary. They wonder whether their questions disqualify them being a follower of Christ. They feel insecure because they're not sure whether it's permissible to express uncertainty about God, Jesus, or the Bible. So they keep their questions to themselves—and inside, unanswered, they

grow and fester . . . until they eventually succeed in choking out their faith.{1}

So what can we do if we find ourselves struggling with doubts about the truth of Christianity? Why do such doubts arise? And how can we rid ourselves of these taunting Goliaths?

First, we must always remember that sooner or later we'll probably *all* have to wrestle with doubts about our faith. As Christian philosopher William Lane Craig observes, "Any Christian who is intellectually engaged and reflecting about his faith will inevitably face the problem of doubt." {2} Doubts can arise for all sorts of reasons. Sometimes they're largely intellectual. We might doubt that the Bible is *really* inspired by God or that Jesus was *really* born of a virgin. But doubts can take other forms as well. If a person has experienced great sorrow or disappointment, such as personal wounds from family or friends, the loss of a job, a painful divorce, the death of a loved one, or the loss of health, they may be seriously tempted to doubt the goodness, love, and care of their heavenly Father. {3}

Whenever they come and whatever form they take, we must each deal honestly with our doubts. To ignore them is to court spiritual disaster. But facing them can lead ultimately to a deeper faith. As Christian minister Lynn Anderson has said, "A faith that's challenged by adversity or tough questions . . . is often a stronger faith in the end." {4}

## **It's Not All in Your Head!**

Sometimes people have sincere doubts about the truth of Christianity, intellectual obstacles that hinder them from placing their trust in Christ. In such cases, Christians have an obligation to respond to the person's doubts and make a humble and thoughtful defense for the truth of Christianity. Nevertheless, as Craig observes, it's important to realize

that “doubt is never a purely intellectual problem.” Like it or not, there’s always a “spiritual dimension to the problem that must be recognized.”[\[5\]](#) Because of this, sometimes a person’s objections to Christianity are really just a smokescreen, an attempt to cover up the *real* reason for their rejection of Christ, which is often an underlying moral or spiritual issue.

I once heard a story about a Christian apologist who spoke at a university about the evidence for Christianity. Afterward, a student approached him and said, “I honestly didn’t expect this to happen, but you satisfactorily answered all my objections to Christianity.” The apologist was a bit startled by such a frank admission, but he quickly recovered himself and said, “Well that’s great! Why not give your life to Christ right now, then?” But the student said, “No. I’m not willing to do that. I would have to change the way I’m living, and I’m just not ready to do that right now.”

In this case all the student’s reasons for doubting the Christian faith had, by his own admission, been satisfactorily answered. What was really holding him back were not his doubts about the truth of Christianity, but a desire to live life on his own terms. To put it bluntly, he didn’t want God meddling in his affairs. He didn’t want to be morally accountable to some ultimate authority. The truth is that a person’s intellectual objections to Christianity are *rarely* the whole story. As Christian scholar Ravi Zacharias observed, “A man rejects God neither because of intellectual demands nor because of the scarcity of evidence. A man rejects God because of a moral resistance that refuses to admit his need for God.”[\[6\]](#)

Unfortunately, Christians aren’t immune to doubting their faith for similar reasons. I know of a young man who had converted to Christianity, but who’s now raising various objections to it. But when one looks beneath the surface, one sees that he’s currently involved in an immoral lifestyle. In

order to continue living as he wants, without being unduly plagued by a guilty conscience, he must call into question the truth of Christianity. For the Bible tells him plainly that he's disobeying God. Of course, ultimately no one is immune to doubts about Christianity, so we'll now consider some ways to guard our hearts and minds.

## **I Believe, Help My Unbelief!**

As He came down the mountain, Jesus was met by a large crowd of people. A father had brought his demon-possessed son to Jesus' disciples, but they were not able to cast the demon out. In desperation the father appealed to Jesus, "If You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!" Jesus answered, "If You can! All things are possible to him who believes." The father responded, "I do believe; help my unbelief."[\[7\]](#)

Can you identify with the father in this story? I know I can. Oftentimes as Christians we find that our faith is in precisely the same state as this father's. We genuinely believe, but we need help with our unbelief. It's always been an encouragement to me that after the father's admission of a faith mixed with doubt, Jesus nonetheless cast out the demon and healed the man's son.[\[8\]](#) But of course no Christian should be content to remain in this state. If we want to grow in our faith and rid ourselves of doubts, what are some positive steps we can take to accomplish this?

Well, in the first place, it's helpful to be familiar with the "principle of displacement." As Sue "Archimedes" Bohlin, one of my colleagues, has written:

The Bible teaches the principle of "displacement." That is, rather than trying to make thoughts shoo away, we are told to replace them with what is good, true, and perfect (Phil. 4:8). As the truth comes in the lies are displaced—much like when we fill a bathtub too full of water, and when we get

in, our bodies displace the water, which flows out over the top of the tub.{9}

Once we grasp this principle, a number of steps for dealing with doubt quickly become evident. For one thing, we can memorize and meditate upon Scripture. We can also listen attentively to good Christian music. Paul speaks to the importance of both of these in Colossians 3:16: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.”

In addition, we can read good Christian books that provide intelligent answers to some of the questions we might be asking. Great Christian scholars have addressed almost every conceivable objection to the truth of Christianity. If you have nagging doubts about some aspect of your faith, there’s almost certainly a work of Christian scholarship that speaks to it in detail. Finally, we must never forget that this is a spiritual battle. So let’s remember to put on the full armor of God so we can stand firm in the midst of it!{10}

## Faith and Reason

How can we [know if Christianity is really true?](#) Is it by reason, or evidence, or mystical experience? Dr. Craig has an answer to this question that you might find a bit surprising.{11} He distinguishes between *knowing* Christianity is true and *showing* that it’s true. Ideally, one attempts to *show* that Christianity is true with good arguments and evidence. But Craig doesn’t think that this is how we *know* our faith is true. Rather, he believes that we can *know* our faith is true because “God’s Spirit makes it evident to us that our faith is true.”{12}

Consider Paul’s statement in Romans 8:16, “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.” Since

every believer is indwelt by God's Spirit, every believer also receives the Spirit's testimony that he is one of God's children. This is sometimes called the "assurance of salvation." Dr. Craig comments on the significance of this:

Salvation entails that God exists, that Christ atoned for our sins . . . and so forth, so that if you are assured of your salvation, then you must be assured of . . . these other truths as well. Hence, the witness of the Holy Spirit gives the believer an immediate assurance that his faith is true.{13}

Now this is remarkable. For it means we can *know* that Christianity is true, wholly apart from arguments, simply by attending to the witness of the Holy Spirit. And this is so not only for believers but for unbelievers, too. For the Spirit convicts the unbelieving world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, particularly the sin of unbelief.{14} So when we're confronted with objections to Christianity that we can't answer, we needn't worry. First, answers are usually available if one knows where to look. But second, the witness of the Spirit trumps any objections we might encounter.

Consider an illustration from the Christian philosopher Alvin Plantinga. Suppose I'm accused of stealing a document out of a colleague's office. Suppose I have a motive, an opportunity, and a history of doing such things. Suppose further that someone thought they saw me lurking around my colleague's office just before the document went missing. There's much evidence against me. But in fact, I didn't steal the document. I was on a walk at the time. Now should I doubt my innocence since the evidence is against me? Of course not! For I *know* I'm not guilty!{15}

Similarly, writes Dr. Craig, "I needn't be shaken when objections come along that I can't answer."{16} For my faith isn't ultimately based on arguments, but on the witness of God's Spirit.

# Stepping into the Light

We've seen that both Christians and non-Christians can have doubts about the truth of Christianity. We've also seen that such doubts are never *just* an intellectual issue; there's *always* a spiritual dynamic that's involved as well. But since we'll probably never be able to fully resolve every single doubt we might experience, I would like to conclude by suggesting one final way to make our doubts flee before us, much as roaches flee to their hidden lairs when one turns on the light!

In John 7:17 Jesus says, "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own." Here, Jesus frankly encourages us to put His teachings to the test and see for ourselves whether He really speaks for God or not. As biblical scholar Merrill Tenney comments, "Spiritual understanding is not produced solely by learning facts or procedures, but rather it depends on obedience to known truth. Obedience to God's known will develops discernment between falsehood and truth."[\[17\]](#) Are we *really* serious about dealing with our lingering doubts? If so, Jesus says that if we resolutely choose to do God's will, we can know if His teaching is really from God!

Sadly, however, many of us will *never* take Jesus up on His challenge. No matter how loudly we might *claim* to want to rid ourselves of doubt, the truth is that many of us just aren't *willing* to do God's will. But if you are, then Jesus says that "you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."[\[18\]](#) In other words, we can know by *experience* that Jesus is from God, that His teachings are true, and that He really is who He claimed to be!

As Christian philosopher Dallas Willard observes, the issue ultimately comes down to what we *really* want:

The Bible says that if you seek God with all your heart,

then you will surely find him. Surely find him. It's the person who wants to know God that God reveals himself to. And if a person doesn't want to know God—well, God has created the world and the human mind in such a way that he doesn't have to.{19}

The psalmist encourages us to “taste and see that the Lord is good.”{20} If we do, we can know not only that God is good, but also that He exists. And even if we still have some lingering doubts and unanswered questions in the back of our minds, as we surely will, they'll gradually fade into utter insignificance as we become more intimately acquainted with Him who loves us and who reconciled us to Himself through the death of His Son!{21}

## Notes

1. Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2000), 316.
2. William Lane Craig, *Hard Questions, Real Answers* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2003), 31.
3. Lynn Anderson, interviewed in Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith*, 322.
4. Ibid., 326.
5. Craig, *Hard Questions, Real Answers*, 33.
6. Ravi Zacharias, quoted in Strobel, *The Case for Faith*, 343. See also John 3:19-21.
7. Mark 9:14-24.
8. See Mark 9:25-29.
9. Sue Bohlin, “I’m Having a Terrible Battle in My Mind,” Probe Ministries, [probe.org/im-having-a-terrible-battle-in-my-mind/](http://probe.org/im-having-a-terrible-battle-in-my-mind/).
10. See Ephesians 6:10-20.
11. This section is largely just a summary of the discussion of faith and reason in Craig, *Hard Questions, Real Answers*, 35-39.
12. Ibid., 35.
13. Ibid., 36.



14. See John 16:7-11.
15. Alvin Plantinga, "The Foundations of Theism: A Reply," *Faith and Philosophy* 3 (1986): 310; cited in Craig, *Hard Questions, Real Answers*, 38-39.
16. Ibid., 39.
17. Merrill C. Tenney, "The Gospel of John," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebeline, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 84.
18. John 8:32.
19. Dallas Willard, quoted in Strobel, *The Case for Faith*, 352.
20. Psalm 34:8.
21. See 2 Corinthians 5:18-21.

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## **Probe Survey Report #4: Witnessing to Your Faith and the Response**

*Steve Cable continues to explore Probe's 2020 survey on religious beliefs and practices, examining how people witness to their faith or not, and reasons for both sharing and for not trusting Christ.*

### **1. How Often Do You Witness to Your Faith?**

Let's consider the topic of witnessing or sharing your faith with others. In our 2020 survey we asked two questions about this topic. The first question was: *How often do you engage in intentional spiritual conversation with non-believers about*

*your faith with a desire to see them accept it for themselves?* With this question, we wanted to avoid casual mentions of your faith and discussions with no intent at conversion. The results as shown in the chart below are surprising.

Among Americans ages 18 through 39 who profess an affiliation with some religion, we find that less than 1 out of 5 (20%) of them strongly disagree with the statement that Muhammad, Buddha and Jesus all taught valid ways to God. Yet at the same time almost 6 out of 10 (60%) of them state that they share their faith with an unbeliever at least once a year with the intent of converting them to their belief.

So the majority of American believers (of any faith) must believe that at least for some people with different religious beliefs, it would be better for them to turn from their current belief and accept the tenets of my faith. They want to do this even though they believe that there are multiple ways to God not beyond just their faith.

Looking at the detailed results, all religions except the Unaffiliated showed very similar results: over 20% (1 in 5) of those witnessed at least monthly and about half witnessed at least yearly. So, it would appear that there is a lot of witnessing going on with very few conversions.

*Figure 1 Witness with a Desire to See Conversion*

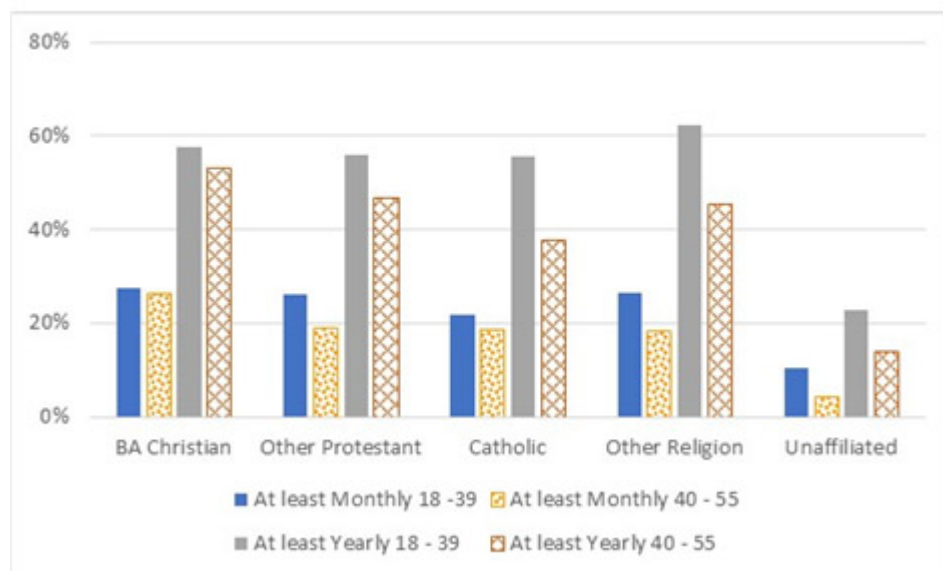


Table 1 below shows several estimates as to how many people

are the recipients of these “*intentional spiritual conversations*” in a given year. The different levels shown are based on different assumptions as to how often they share with the same person and how many people they share with in a year consistent with the responses to the survey. More details are provided in the endnotes.

Table 1 Potential

Number of People Shared with by American Adults Ages 18 through 55

Religious Affiliation of Person Sharing with Intent to Convert	Potential number of individuals shared with in one year		
	Low estimate (millions){1}	Nominal estimate (millions){2}	High estimate (millions){3}
Born Again Protestant	27	56	118
Other Protestant	24	50	106
Catholic	25	51	108
Other Religion	15	31	65
Unaffiliated	12	25	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>449</b>

These results amazed me. If the nominal estimate was truly happening almost 60% of the population would have someone attempting to convert them every year. This topic deserves additional related questions to determine what level of sharing with the intent of conversion is actually happening in America. It may be that most people answering this question are only sharing with one or two family members such as their teenage children or a sibling. Or perhaps, many people think they would do this, but really they do not.

What makes this especially surprising is that Other

Protestants and Catholics have a lot more people witnessing than they have holding a Basic Biblical Worldview or actually being involved in their religion. While only about one in ten (10%) strongly disagree with the statement that Mohammed, Buddha and Jesus all taught valid ways to God, over half (50%) of them are sharing their faith with the intent to convert at least once a year. And, one in five (20%) are sharing monthly or more. If you think that there are multiple ways to heaven, why would you want to go out of your way to convert someone to your religion. Of course, you could be sharing with an Unaffiliated person who needs to choose a valid religion.

Only 4.6% of Other Protestants and 0.7% of Catholics have a Basic Biblical Worldview, but almost half of them say they intentionally witness to their faith at least yearly. When they engage in a conversation with the intent of having this other person accept their faith for themselves, WHAT IS THIS FAITH THEY ARE TRYING TO GET THE OTHER PERSON TO ACCEPT? These results do suggest that most people desire more people to think like them when it comes to religion.

In a similar vein, less than 1 in 10 (10%) Catholics and Other Protestants say they pray daily, attend church at least monthly, read the Bible weekly and say their faith is important in their daily life. So, the question remains, "What are they witnessing to???"

In contrast, only 29% of Born Again Christians have a Basic Biblical Worldview while well over half of them report intentional witnessing at least once a year. But at least BAC's have something to witness to. Those Born Again Christians with a Basic Biblical Worldview report that almost two thirds (63%) of them share their faith at least once a year. This level is only a few percentage points higher than that for Born Again Christians as a whole.

## **How Should We Respond?**

If the number of people sharing their faith is actually consistent with the answers to this question, then we know that the percentage of people actually converting as a result of their witness is very small. Otherwise, we would have many people toggling back and forth between different professed religions.

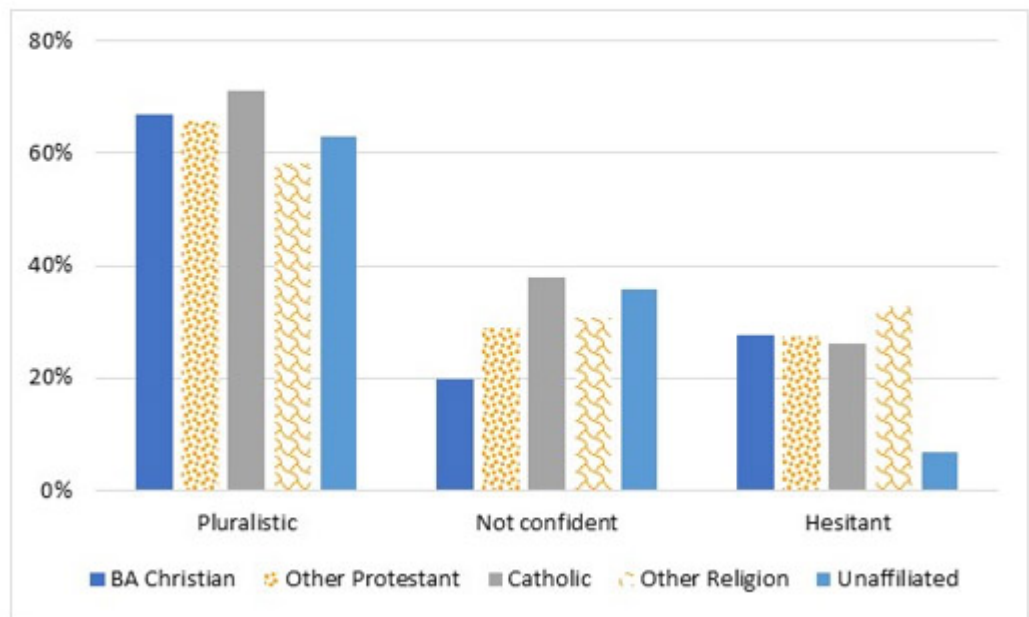
Among Born Again Christians, we project they are sharing their faith with between 25 million and 100 million nonbelievers. However, they are sharing ineffectively with the number being shared with far exceeding the growth rate of evangelicals in America. So, pastors and parachurch organizations need to up their game in training their people to share the good news of Christ. BAC's need to understand and practice the following:

1. Bathe their unsaved acquaintances in prayer asking God to bring to a clear feeling of need
2. Recognize their call to effectively share the gospel looking for opportunities to share
3. Understand how to build bridges spanning the gaps of understanding for those with different worldviews
4. Clearly explain the wonderful gift purchased for us through Jesus' death and resurrection
5. Unapologetically ask for a response to the good news shared with others
6. Realize that they should not be discouraged by a lack of interest or the lack of a positive response

## **2. What Keeps You From Communicating Your Religious Belief?**

We also asked the question: "When I refrain from communicating my religious belief with someone, it's usually because:"{4  
}

*Figure 2 Reason for Refraining from Witnessing  
Americans 18 through 39*



1. They can get to heaven through their different religious belief. [Pluralism]
2. We shouldn't impose our ideas on others. [Pluralism]
3. The Bible tells us not to judge others. [Pluralism]
4. It just doesn't seem to be that important and I don't want to risk alienating them. [Not confident]
5. I'm not confident enough in what I believe. [Not confident]
6. I'm waiting for a better opportunity. [Hesitant]

For the chart in Figure 2, we grouped these responses into three sets:

- **Pluralism** – There are other ways besides my way and I don't need to impose my way on others (responses 1, 2 and 3)
- **Not confident** – Not confident that what I have to share is important to them and/or not confident that what I believe is true (responses 4 and 5)
- **Hesitant** – No rush, I can probably find a better time (response 6)

As seen in the chart, the level of respondents selecting each

set of reasons for refraining are consistent across all religious beliefs. At first glance, this may seem surprising. But in a culture where pluralism is a dominant part of all religious groups, it begins to make sense. And the pluralistic reasons were dominant, attracting around two thirds of the population across all religious groupings.

For Born Again Christians, lack of confidence in what they believe is less of an issue than for other groups. And we see that the Unaffiliated are much less likely to be hesitant waiting for a better time at around 5% of all Unaffiliated. But note that most of the other groups had less than 25% say that they were hesitant.

Looking at both of the charts, we see that (even with a lot of people saying they sometimes used excuses to avoid the subject) a majority of people of any religious group (not including the unaffiliated) share with someone with a desire to recruit them at least once a year. I would suspect that most of these people are sharing with a family member or close friend. However, we did not ask the question so that is only reasonable speculation.

### **How Should We Respond?**

If you are a church leader or a person who desires to see Christians sharing the good news of Jesus with those who need to know, how should you respond to this data on self-identified barriers to sharing with others?

On the most common reasons (which indicate a belief that other people don't really need to know about salvation through faith in Jesus), we need to make the exclusive role of Jesus Christ in any hope of salvation a recurring and prominent theme in our teaching. This is not a topic to tiptoe gingerly around. Rather, we need to boldly proclaim, "There is salvation in no other name under heaven other than the name of Jesus Christ." God would not have planned from before the beginning of time

to sacrifice himself on the cross for our salvation if there were any other means to reconcile sinful men and women to Himself. God will not force reconciliation on us. We can choose to reject His grace. But as Paul tells us in Romans, "How are they to believe in one they have not heard of?" If we think we can slough off our responsibility to tell others, we do not understand the grace of God and our role as citizens of heaven living on this earth.

For those who do not feel confident in their ability, we need to provide training and practice environments for them to learn to share their faith experience. You are telling someone about the most important element of your life; the process that brought you out of death into true life. Help prepare them and put them in a position to share the good news with a mentor alongside them.

### **3. Why Have You Not Believed In Salvation Through Jesus Christ?**

Finally, we wanted to know why people have not accepted the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. This is really a question on the other side of witnessing. I am including it here, but it could easily be a separate topic.

The question asked was as follows: *What keeps you from believing that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ alone?*

The following options were given to select from:

1. Don't believe that God would take upon Himself the penalty for my sin.
2. Salvation is not a gift, it must be earned.
3. I am clearly as good as Christians I know so I should be accepted by God if they are.
4. There is no personal, creator God.
5. Another answer not listed here.
6. Never gave the question any thought.



## 7. Not applicable, I do believe.

The table below captures the range of answers to this question.

Ages 18 – 39					
	Born Again Protestant	Other Protestant	Catholic	Other Religion	Unaffiliated
Don't believe that God would take the penalty for my sin	4.1%	13.7%	16.3%	10.6%	5.9%
Salvation is not a gift, it must be earned	15.7%	20.1%	23.8%	22.0%	8.0%
I am clearly as good as Christians I know	11.9%	10.6%	16.2%	12.9%	8.1%
There is no personal, creator God	1.0%	2.8%	2.7%	5.8%	23.9%
Another answer not listed here	6.9%	9.9%	9.3%	21.9%	28.2%
Never gave the question any thought	15.0%	29.7%	16.3%	12.7%	13.5%
Not applicable, I do believe	45.4%	13.3%	15.5%	14.1%	12.5%

The first thing to notice in this table is that less than half of Born Again Protestants selected “Not applicable, I do believe.” This result is odd since one of the questions required to be considered a Born Again Protestant is “The statement that best describes you own belief about what will happen to you after you die is ‘*I will go to heaven because I confessed my sins and accepted Jesus Christ as my savior.*’” Perhaps some of the Born Agains thought we wanted to know what was keeping them away before they surrendered to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Perhaps this is because some of them consider “confessed my sins and accepted” as something they did to earn their salvation. In that case, one could possibly consider answers 2, 5, 6 and 7 as consistent with Born Again

Protestants. Although that would be somewhat of a stretch. That assumption still leaves 17% of BA Protestants whose answers are clearly inconsistent.

Other Protestants are most likely to say, "I never gave the question any thought" or "Salvation must be earned" with only 13% saying they do believe the statement about salvation through faith alone. Catholics are about the same as Other Protestants in saying they believe in salvation through faith alone. The more frequent answers for Catholics being "it must be earned", "I am clearly as good as Christians I know", and "never gave the question any thought."

The most common answer from the Unaffiliated is "another answer not listed here" followed by "there is no personal, creator God". Those who claim that most "nothing in particulars" are really Christians find little support in that only one in five (20%) say that they do believe in salvation through faith in Jesus.

## **4. Christianity and Other Major World Religions**

One of the things that drives our attitude toward and our approach to witnessing to our faith is how we think Christianity relates to other world religions. In part 2 of this series, we looked at some questions that dealt with believing that multiple religions could offer a workable road to an eternity with God. In this part we will look at what people believe distinguishes Christianity from other world religions if in fact anything does.

We asked our respondents the following question: "*How does Christianity relate to other major world religions?*" The respondents selected from the following choices:

1. Serves the same function with only minor differences
2. Focuses on living after the example of Jesus Christ

3. Teaches that reconciliation with God is a gift of God accessed by faith not by works
4. Promotes love for other people more deeply than other religions
5. Differs based on misconceptions about God and/or history
6. Not sure how it relates

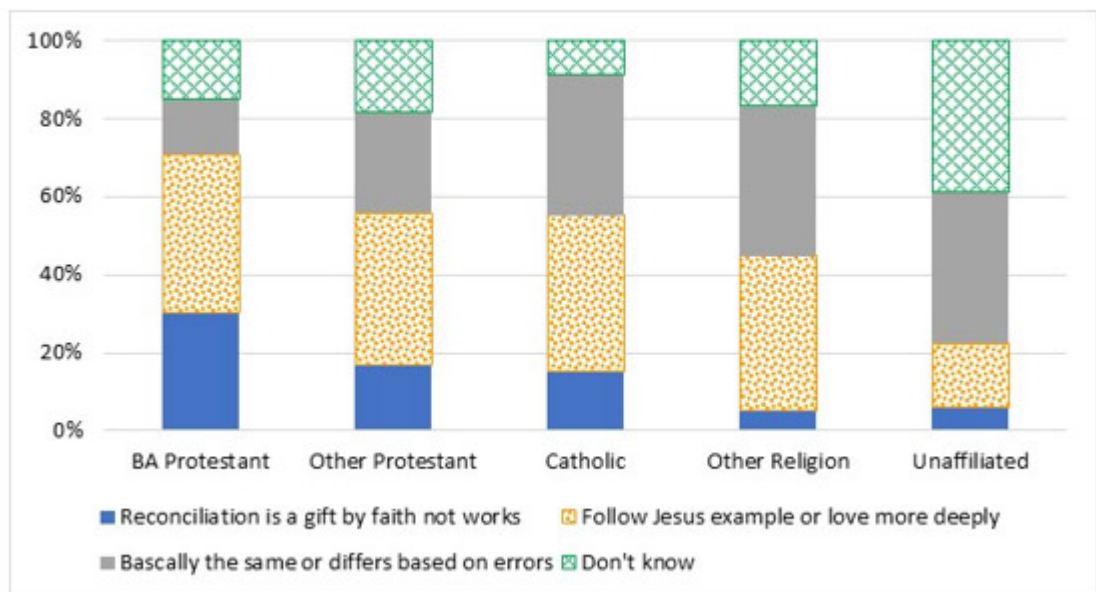
Note that answers 1, 5 and 6 indicate an ignorance about the tenets of Christianity and/or the tenets of other major world religions. As noted earlier, Christianity teaches a way to reconciliation that is very different from other world religions and is not compatible with the reconciliation stories of those other religions.

Answers two and four reflect potential differences between Christianity and other world religions. We do want to follow Christ's example and other world religions would not teach us to do that. Other religions could not promote loving other people more deeply than Christianity does, but some of them might argue that they also promote love for others.

Teaching that reconciliation is a gift of God accessed by faith alone not through works is the greatest substantial difference between Christianity and other world religions. This teaching is significantly different than the teachings of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and others.

The results are charted in the graph to the right. First, notice the interesting result

*Figure 3 How Does Christianity Relate to Other Religions  
Ages 18 - 39*



that only about 30% of Born Again Protestants selected 'reconciliation is a gift' while 40% selected following Jesus' example or love others more deeply. As noted above, this second answer is not inconsistent with the concepts of Christianity but is not as fundamental as the first. However, selecting this answer over reconciliation is a gift' is consistent with what we saw earlier: 70% of Born Again Christians are not exclusivists.[\[5\]](#)

Other Protestants and Catholics have less than one in five that selected 'reconciliation is a gift' and the total selecting answers 1 and 2 is slightly over one half. Thus, almost half of them selected answers showing ignorance of or disbelief in the basic tenets of Christianity.

The results for the Unaffiliated shows their total disregard for salvation by grace and any substantial difference between Christianity and other religions.

## 5. Summary of Key Results

Among Americans ages 18 through 39 who profess an affiliation with some religion, we find that less than 1 out of 5 (20%) of them strongly disagree with the statement that Muhammad,

Buddha and Jesus all taught valid ways to God. Yet at the same time almost 6 out of 10 (60%) of them state that they share their faith with an unbeliever at least once a year with the intent of converting them to their belief.

So the majority of American believers (of any faith) must believe that at least for some people with different religious beliefs, it would be better for them to turn from their current belief and accept the tenets of my faith. They want to do this even though they believe that there are multiple ways to God beyond just their faith.

We also discovered that Born Again Christians are not really more likely than other religious groups to share their faith with the purpose to convert. Born Again Christians with a Biblical Worldview are only marginally more likely to share with the purpose to convert at least yearly as Born Again Christians as a whole (63% vs. 57%).

Amazingly, one could project that nominally about 212 million Americans a year would be the recipients of these spiritual conversations with the intent to convert. However, if almost all of these

conversations were with the same person it might represent as few as 34 million Americans which could be primarily the children and relatives of the person sharing their faith. We cannot know for sure without asking more questions.

Conversely, when asked what makes them refrain from sharing their faith, almost 70% of Born Again Christians selected a reason that indicated they believed that the other person did not really need to know; a universalist belief where all religious beliefs lead to heaven.

About one out of seven (14%) of adults under age 40 who **are not** Born Again Protestants believe that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ alone. This small number is true for Other Protestants, Catholics and Other Religions. This same group of

religious affiliates has about 1 in 3 who believe that salvation is a result of good works and is earned or rewarded on a curving scale.

Less than one in three, Born Again Christians selected the redeeming work of God through faith as the key difference between Christianity and other religions. And less than one in five Other Protestants and Catholics selected that answer. Instead, about three out of four (75%) selected love deeply, obey Jesus or Christianity is basically the same as the message of other religions.

### Notes

1. Low Estimate: Calculated assuming that those sharing at least monthly on the average shared their faith 12 times per year and those sharing at least yearly but less than monthly shared on the average 1 times per year AND that they shared on the average with the same individual four times.
2. Nominal Estimate: Calculated assuming that those sharing at least monthly on the average shared their faith 18 times per year and those sharing at least yearly but less than monthly shared on the average 2 times per year AND that they shared on the average with the same individual three times.
3. High Estimate: Calculated assuming that those sharing at least monthly on the average shared their faith 24 times per year and those sharing at least yearly but less than monthly shared on the average 4 times per year AND that they shared on the average with the same individual two times.
4. Although most people selected only one answer, on this question they could select multiple answers
5. Exclusivists are those who believe that their religion is the only source of correct teaching concerning our relationship with God. When I get time, I will check out the relationship between those who are exclusivists and those who selected 'reconciliation is a gift'

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# “Why Do More Educated People Tend to Deny the Existence of God?”

Why do you suppose that the more highly educated a person becomes, the less likely they are to believe in a God?

What a great question!!

In my “wisdom journal,” I have recorded this insight from Dr. Peter Kreeft, professor at Boston College:

*Intellectuals resist faith longer because they can: where ordinary people are helpless before the light, intellectuals are clever enough to spin webs of darkness around their minds and hide in them. That’s why only Ph.D.s believe any of the 100 most absurd ideas in the world (such as Absolute Relativism, or the Objective Truth of Subjectivism, of the Meaningfulness of Meaninglessness and the Meaninglessness of Meaning, which is the best definition of Deconstructionism I know).*

I loved the timing of your question. My husband just returned from his fifth year of teaching Christian worldview to hundreds of school teachers in Liberia, West Africa. The vast majority of the teachers have no more than a middle school education. When explaining the three major worldviews—atheism/naturalism, pantheism and theism—he has discovered that most of these teachers are flabbergasted that anyone would deny that there is a God. They have lived their whole lives permeated by the spiritual, so when they learned that some people deny the existence of God, that didn’t make

sense. Even in their traditional African religion (animism), embracing the spiritual was as natural as breathing.

So glad you wrote.

Sue Bohlin

P.S. I have observed this same phenomenon Dr. Kreeft notes—of higher intelligence, often reflected in higher education—appearing in those who embrace and celebrate homosexuality as normal and natural. It takes a higher degree of mental acumen to be able to do the mental gymnastics it takes to avoid the clear and simple truth that “the parts don’t fit.” Not physically, and not psychologically.

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## **“My Hurting Friend Has Stopped Believing in God”**

I have a friend who has had a rough couple of years. Her parents split up and she doesn’t like her mom’s boyfriend and she recently told me she has stopped believing in God though she has been brought up to be a Christian. She just told me and a friend all this stuff and we don’t know what to say, could you please help?

I wouldn’t worry about what your friend is saying right now about not believing in God. Those are the words of a broken heart. Often when people feel God has abandoned them or betrayed them because He has allowed something bad to happen, they respond by saying, “OK, God, I’ll show you, I won’t believe in You anymore!” They don’t really mean it. . . they’re just hurting so bad they don’t know how else to



respond.

If she were my friend, I would just be there for her, put an arm around her and hug her and love on her, and silently ask God to love her through me. She needs friends, she needs support, she needs to feel loved and cared for. That's how she'll eventually come to realize how God was loving her in her pain.

I also wouldn't get into any arguments about God. If she says things like "Well, I don't believe in God anymore, if God were there He wouldn't let stuff like this happen," I'd just nod and say, "Yeah, it really stinks what's going on, and I don't blame you for hurting so bad."

Just keep in mind what her heart needs instead of what her mouth is saying. And love her, love her, love her through it. Later on you can tell her you were doing it in Jesus' name.

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

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## **"I Can't Find a Good Reason to Believe in God and the Bible"**

I have been reading some of the questions and answers that have been given about god, angels and the rest. Some of the questions make sense but to me almost none of the answers. Just so you know, I am a non believer in all of that and can

find no good reason to believe. I tried going to church, going to meetings, bible study, prayer meetings—for me there are no real answers to anything in this life, just excuses. Maybe I am writing this with hopes of finding some.

When I have read the bible I find the good that everyone talks about and speaks of. It is always the same few things. The reason for me is because there is so little of it. I find plenty of ethnic cleansing, wars of extermination, murder of men women and children ordered by god. If the numbers in the bible are true which I do not believe they are, it is just something to try and frighten people. If the numbers of people ordered murdered by or murdered by god are anywhere near what is real, it makes Hitler, Stalin and Mao look like made-up cartoon characters. Yet we read about them and are appalled, so why not god?

I really believe to read the bible without horror one must undo everything that is tender, sympathizing and benevolent in the heart of man. That is what is the most frightening thing to me about most people who believe. I know I cannot read the bible with an open mind and not be appalled at the majority of the actions of god. I have tried. For me this is not divine love. People are always upset at the amount of violence that is in society, much of it on television—why not by the amount of it in the bible? The treatment of women is one of the most horrible I have ever read...for the most part. In both the old and new testament. That can easily be pointed out in both the laws of the part of the world at that time and in the laws of god.

I do not at all understand how the two most powerful beings in existence cannot solve their own problems and if they can't do that, how am I to believe either of them can assist me in any way? And because they couldn't get along, the entire human race is damned because of that? Makes no sense to me. That to me is like saying one of my siblings did something wrong so I am going to spank all of you for it. And in the case with god

it is not because of the siblings it is because he and satan can't get along.

Because of this and many more things I have read in the bible along with research on the meaning of words and laws of that time...I cannot believe. There are too many other teachings that show a much more kinder way of life for human beings. There are many people I have met in life who know that the violent nature of human beings does not exist in all of us...and that is what we live everyday. I believe that in those in whom it does exist, the bible more so than not gives excuses for it to continue. If the entire book is what it is really about, then entire book should be taught. I would love to attend a class bible class that teaches that. I have not yet found one. I know I would be a tough student...not because I want to be...but because I want to know. I just can't take another bible study that does not go into everything in the book

Thank you for writing Probe Ministries. Although it may be a hard thing to read, I believe that God's command to the Israelites to utterly destroy the Canaanites teaches us a very important lesson about God. God is absolutely holy and will by no means leave the guilty unpunished (see Exodus 34:7; Numbers 14:18; Proverbs 11:21; Nahum 1:3). The Canaanites were guilty of some of the worst crimes imaginable: terrible idolatry, immoral sexual behavior, and child sacrifice, just to name a few. All the way back in Genesis 15:13-16, God revealed to Abram His plan to give His people the land of Canaan. However, notice that His promise would not be fulfilled for over 400 years. Why? Because, as God said, "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete" (Gen. 15:16). We must not forget, therefore, that God was very patient with the wicked practices of these people. He gave them hundreds of years to repent and turn from their wicked ways. But they chose not to. In the end, God did indeed judge them for their sin—just as He will one day judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31; Matt. 25:31-46; Revelation 20:11-15).

Let me also point out that God, as the Sovereign Creator and Judge of all mankind, has the right to give life and to take it away. After giving the Canaanites hundreds of years to repent, God finally judged their sins by waging a holy war against them through His people. This was a Divine judgment upon the Canaanites for their sins. It was also the means by which God would protect His chosen people from being corrupted by the wicked practices of these peoples (see Deuteronomy 12:2-4; 20:16-18). The lesson we are taught, I believe, is that God takes sin very seriously and will, as the perfectly holy and righteous Judge of all mankind, punish all sin without exception. In the end, not one sin will go unpunished. If any sin went unpunished, God would not be perfectly just. But since He is perfectly just, not one sin will go unpunished. This is a sober warning to all mankind that God is very serious about judging sin. It is quite proper for us to react to these stories with a healthy fear of God's judgment. Although God's judgment on the Canaanites was severe, the number of peoples killed is not anywhere close to the numbers murdered by Hitler and Stalin. But even if they were, it's important to put these events in proper perspective. After all, God's judgment on those who reject His Son and the free offer of His friendship, grace, love and forgiveness, results in much more severe consequences than mere physical death (see Revelation 20:11-15). Those who reject Jesus' sacrifice on the cross in their place as the only acceptable payment for their sins, will have to pay for their sins themselves. And this involves eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46).

As for [the treatment of women](#), it's very important to recognize that women in ancient Israel, and especially in the early church, were treated far better than they were in the surrounding cultures of those days. All the way back in Genesis 1:27 we are told that BOTH men and women are created in the image and likeness of God. Paul says that in Christ there is neither male nor female, for we are all one in Christ (Galatians 3:28). He urged husbands to love their wives in the

same manner that Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25). This is a sacrificial sort of love that would even give its life for the beloved, just as Christ did for His church. Christianity actually did more than any other force in the ancient world to bring about an elevation in the status of women.

It's important to realize that man is not punished because God and Satan can't get along. This idea is taught nowhere in the Bible. Men are to be judged and punished for their sins (unless they repent and receive God's mercy through faith in Christ Jesus), just as Satan and his angels are to be judged and punished for theirs. We will not be punished because God and Satan can't get along. Furthermore, we shouldn't think of God and Satan as virtual equals. Satan is a rebel angel, a being originally created good by God, but who rebelled against God and sinned. Satan has no more power relative to God than you or I. Compared to God, Satan is completely powerless. Indeed, the only power he has is due to the fact that God created him with it, maintains him in existence, and (for the moment) allows him to exercise it in a manner contrary to His perfect moral will. At God's proper time, Satan will be cast into the lake of fire for all eternity (Revelation 20:10). He will never be permitted to wreak chaos and moral rebellion in God's world again.

Finally, I will honestly say that I don't believe there is a higher example of moral purity, holiness and virtue than that of Jesus. If what He taught is true, then the only way to be reconciled to God is through faith in Him (John 14:6). Furthermore, the Bible does not acknowledge that anyone (other than Jesus) is without sin or guilt. The Bible teaches that not one of us is righteous (Romans 3:10), but that all of us are sinners (Romans 3:23). Nevertheless, although the wages of sin is death, the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23). Although Christians are not perfect, Christ Jesus is. And it is to Him that God invites us

to look for His grace, mercy, love, forgiveness, and eternal life. “O taste and see that the Lord is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!” (Psalm 34:8).

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn  
Probe Ministries

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## **“I Struggle with Doubts”**

Hello there – I have a question that I hope you can help me with. I am 38 years old and I have recently lost my second parent to cancer – and I am going through a time where I guess you could say I am re-evaluating my belief system. I was raised in the Presbyterian Church and currently attend \_\_\_\_\_ here in Houston. What I struggle with is occasional doubts lately and I find it really scary. I believe in God without question but I have trouble sometimes comprehending the resurrection and life after death.....I want to believe and have a stronger faith that’s for sure!! The thing that bothers me is someone told me that doubts were blasphemy and that by having doubts you are calling God a liar and that I might not have ever truly been saved. Needless to say that has petrified me, however others have mentioned that doubts are normal..... I went through confirmation with the Presbyterian Church when I was 12 and hope that I am saved. I would really appreciate your thoughts on this!!!! You honor me by sharing your heart with me. Thank you.

Let me cast my vote with those who have assured you that doubts are normal. God understands that as puny-minded humans who are trying to relate to a God we cannot see, touch, or hear, we’re going to face areas we don’t understand! Often,

what we experience is confusion, but some people label it doubt.

I think doubt is more in-your-face unbelief. "I know You're there, God, but I question Your goodness to me so I'm going to do things my own way and pretend like You're not there." The way that Satan encouraged Eve to doubt God's goodness in the garden of Eden.

There is a difference between being overcome by doubts and struggling with comprehending really huge mysteries like the resurrection. God understands, especially at a time like this when you're grieving. (I am so very, very sorry, to hear about your parents' deaths. This is my first Mother's Day without my mother, who died a few months ago. It's hard, isn't it?)

Since you have internet access, you can get some very interesting information about the resurrection and life after death that will help strengthen and establish your faith in those areas. You can start reading at the Probe Ministries site ([www.probe.org](http://www.probe.org)) and look in the "[Apologetics: Reasons to Believe](#)" section. Leadership University ([Leaderu.com](http://Leaderu.com)) also has some dynamite articles.

Concerning the statement that doubts are [blasphemy](#). Well, no, they're not the same thing. People like you who are concerned that it is, are never guilty of it! Blasphemy is hard-hearted insult against God. I'm sorry that someone has burdened you with the false guilt of "calling God a liar." Now that would be pretty blasphemous, but simply experiencing some questions is usually an issue of not being sure of something. And that's a far cry from saying "God, You're a blankety-blank liar."

Truly saved people have doubts all the time. That's the first step to wrestling with individual issues of faith, and studying them to come out with a stronger faith on the other end. God isn't threatened by our doubts and questions. When we go to Him in simple faith, asking Him to help us understand

truth and help us see things as they really are, He truly does answer. It may take a while, but He takes those requests seriously.

You said you were confirmed when you were 12 and you hope that you are saved. I am so glad you put it so bluntly, because I am delighted to be able to give you some very clear direction on this!

Quick question: what were you confirmed IN? Were you confirmed that yes, indeed, you were a Presbyterian, the way we confirm flight reservations? Or were you confirmed in your faith because at some point before that, as you were growing up, you made a deliberate choice to put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?

He told Nicodemus that we must be born again. Just like when we were born the first time, that's a specific event at a specific point in time. In order to pass over from death to life, there must be a specific point at which we choose God over our own way, where we realize that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and we receive His gift of forgiveness and eternal life by saying "thank You!"

So my question to you is, was there a specific point at which you were born again? Being baptized as an infant doesn't do it, because that's not a decision that a disciple makes; it's more of a statement of our parents' intent to raise us in the ways of God. It's possible to go along, learning the catechism questions and having a lot of religious head knowledge ABOUT God, without ever embracing Him as our personal Lord and Savior. Have you done that?

If you have, YOU ARE SAVED FOREVER. If you haven't, then you aren't saved but you can be as soon as you choose to. I know several people who just weren't sure of a specific time and place when they chose to put their trust in Christ, so they chose right then and there and said to God, "God, I am a



sinner and I need you. Thank You for sending Jesus to die on the cross in my place, and then raising Him from the dead three days later. I believe Jesus is Your Son, and I trust Him to save me from my sins and take me to heaven when I die.” Then they KNEW they had trusted Christ and had passed over from death to life.

1 John 5:11-13 says,

11 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

I love the part in verse 13 that says, “you may KNOW that you have eternal life.” When someone showed that to me not long after I trusted Christ as a college sophomore, that was the point at which I knew for sure that I was saved—because the Bible said I could know! That was very cool for me, since I was raised just hoping that everything would be okay when I died but I couldn’t ever know. Now I KNOW!!!

Let me know what you think about all this, OK?

The Lord bless you and keep you.

Sue Bohlin

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