

THE CHRISTIAN'S ANSWER TO LIFE'S BIG QUESTIONS 5

If Jesus taught all about love, how come Christians are so judgmental, intolerant & narrow-minded? Or are they?

→ Have you ever been asked this question? Do you think people out there are thinking it even if they're not outwardly asking it? What has led them to that conclusion and are they right?

→ What common errors are you seeing Christians make, in the public sphere, or social media, in their daily lives?

→ Christy Wimber tweeted: "If I wasn't a believer & tried to figure who Jesus is by what His followers say on media, would I want to know Him? Probably not. Too much judgment." Is she right? Does she have a point?

TWO SUGGESTED SCENARIOS

1. They've met one or two ODD Christians and been PUT OFF.
2. It's merely POP WISDOM = loosely-founded GENERALISATION, SWEEPING statements, easily PARROTED.

→ What 'pop wisdom' is there out there / have you heard reported about Christianity / God / Jesus / the Bible?

THREE ANSWERS / LINES OF REASONING

1. CHRISTIANS ARE AND ALWAYS HAVE BEEN AT THE CENTRE OF EVERYTHING HUMANITARIAN

- * For every Mother Teresa there are 100s of UNSEEN, UNKNOWN, UNHERALDED HEROES of the faith, working in the four corners of the globe.
- * Christians are UNLOVING? NONSENSE! Once His love GRIPS your HEART, you're NEVER the SAME.

→ What Christians have you observed at the hub of demonstrations of Jesus' love: personally or publically? What schools / universities / hospitals / charities do you know of that have a Christian foundation?

2. LOVE AIN'T ALL YOU NEED

- * As Christians, we absolutely believe in LOVE, but we also believe in JUSTICE and HOLINESS.
- * Creates significant TENSIONS for Christians: How do we UPHOLD and PROMOTE godly values of PURITY and MORALITY without appearing judgmental, narrow-minded and intolerant?

→ Are we supposed to be the morality police? What responsibilities do we have to uphold and promote godly values? What tensions do we face in doing so? How do we balance grace and truth in 21st Century moral issues?

→ If our position is biblical, don't we have responsibility to stand up for it? How do we contend graciously with moral issues that clash with what we believe? If we don't stand up for truth, how will they know? How will they change? Why should they change?

3 QUICK THOUGHTS

a) What AROMA are we emitting? (2 Cor 2:14-16)

- * Is it the SWEET FRAGRANCE OF JESUS or the FOUL STENCH OF RELIGION?
- * Paradox = Even though Jesus was the HOLIEST of all, people RAN to Him.

→ Ghandi is quoted as saying, "I like your Christ. I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ." Does he have a point? Is he being harsh? Into what specific context were his remarks made? Did He really know Christ, I wonder?

→ What are the characteristics and differences between the sweet fragrance of Jesus and the foul stench of religion? Why did people respond so differently to Jesus versus the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law?

b) What right do I have to push my HOLINESS on NON-BELIEVERS or to JUDGE the way they live?

- * Yes, we judge OURSELVES.
- * Yes, we have some responsibility to judge ONE ANOTHER.
- * But we must be extremely careful judging those who DO NOT HOLD to our MORAL VALUES OR BELIEFS

→ What are the dangers of judging other people, particularly those who don't share our Christian faith and values? Why is it usually poorly received? Do you blame them and what could / should we do about that?

c) How do we let our holiness SHINE?

- * If we let God TRANSFORM us on the INSIDE, it will soon become APPARENT on the OUTSIDE.
- * The different facets of holiness = PURITY, INTEGRITY and PEACEFULNESS are hugely ATTRACTIVE to people struggling in the world.
- * Use the WORD as a CARROT not a STICK.
- * Let the HOLY SPIRIT do the CONVICTING.
- * And just be AMBASSADORS for Christ.

→ Why is true holiness so attractive? Why is self-righteousness so unattractive?

→ How do we use the Word as a carrot as opposed to a stick? How do we let the Holy Spirit do the convicting? Why doesn't it work if we lay it on thick in an attempt to do the convicting?

3. YOU'RE RIGHT: WE'RE ALL SINNERS IN NEED OF A SAVIOUR

- * It's all about the GOSPEL.
- * Let's use our INADEQUACY and FAILINGS and their CRITICISMS as an opportunity to tell the STORY of GRACE.
- * There is great power in HUMILITY and AUTHENTICITY.
- * So much better than PHARISAIC, HYPOCRITICAL, HOLIER-THAN-THOU, KNOW-IT-ALL Christianity.

→ How can we turn their question / accusations into a positive? Why are humility and authenticity powerful? What are the opposites of humility and authenticity, what do they look like and what damage do they do?