*They are not the Same*

I do not find it offensive if someone chooses not to believe in Jesus Christ. That is one's personal decision. However, I find it annoying when, out of ignorance, people categorize the Christian faith as merely one of many similar ways to reach God. It is just not so. Christ's work is unique in all human history. You may or may not choose to believe in Him, however, at least you should know the facts.

Let's consider a central idea to every religion and philosophy, the idea of a new life, of an uplifted and improved life. Inherent in every religion or philosophy is the thought of a new life. It is believed that a new life is derived from adhering to what the religion or philosophy considers good and avoiding what is evil. Although definitions of good and evil may vary from religion to religion, nevertheless, if a religious adherent disciplines himself to do good, he would experience a personal reformation, a new beginning, a new life.

Some religions or philosophies emphasize self-discipline rooted in ideas about purity. Others stress the need to love others and be involved in social causes. Still others stress self-actualization and personal growth. Whatever the religion, the basic thought is the same. A new life is a result of transforming oneself through the teachings of a religion or philosophy.

The Christian faith concerning the new life is different. Christ did not bring a message of reformation or self-actualization. He did not come to bring another system of rules that His followers must keep. Instead, Jesus Christ went through a process whereby He Himself could enter and dwell in His believers. He Himself, living, moving and residing within a man or woman is the new life.

The story of this accomplishment is wonderful. God first incarnated to become a man, Jesus Christ. This Jesus lived on the earth for approximately thirty-three years. He moved as a man. He felt as a man. He thought and he suffered as a man. He was made like us in all respects, yet He had no sin. His life was clean, pure and undefiled. He did not succumb to sin. He was not usurped by this world's vanities. Virtues permeated His living. Surely, He was a perfect and glorious man.

But His work did not stop there. If he would have only remained as a wonderful man, we might assume that He should be an object of worship and Christians would exhort one another to "be like Jesus." Christ's work was much more profound.

Christ was crucified and He died on the cross. But death could not hold Him. After three days he resurrected from the dead. In His resurrection something marvelous occurred. He not only arose a victorious God-man, but He also became the "life-giving Spirit." (1 Cor. 15:45b). He was transfigured. He became the Spirit who gives life (John 6:63; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18), so that He could live inside His believers as their new life (Colossians 1:27; John 14:16-20). That same pure, holy, virtuous life was now embodied in the Spirit (Romans 8:9-11), so that whoever would believe into Christ, would receive the life of Christ. This is the new life.

When you become a Christian, you do not pick up new rules and regulations. You do not need to figure out what Christians should or should not do. Instead, you receive Christ Himself. He, as the Spirit, enters into your spirit. All that He is and all that He has done dwells in those who believe.

You may respond, "I don't believe any of this." Perhaps not. And we cannot make you believe it. But at least you must admit that Christ's message of a new life is unique. It is not the same as every other religion. Which prophet of history has promised to live in his people? Which religious teacher can indwell your heart and give you His life? There is none. Therefore, do not lump the Christian faith together with the world's religions and philosophies and call them the same. They are not the same.

J Myer