

WRESTLING WITH SCRIPTURE

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Are Christians Exclusive?

John 14:1-6 (ESV) • Dan Aikins preaching

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” This verse from John 14:6 often generates strong emotions. For some, it points to the certainty of salvation in Jesus. For others, it is the cause of “Christian exclusiveness” or intolerance. Today, we’ll wrestle with this passage, exploring the context of Jesus’ words and the effect they had on the disciples.

1. When you read John 14:1-6, what thoughts and feelings immediately come to the surface?
2. Christians are sometimes accused of being “exclusive.” What do you think people mean when they level this accusation? Has someone ever brought up this idea in conversation with you? What was that conversation like?
3. Should Christians ever be “exclusive”? Why or why not?
4. Dan explained in the sermon that Jesus’ first intent with these words were to provide comfort for His distraught disciples. Why were they distraught? Do you think these words would have brought comfort to someone in their situation?
5. Dan argued that Jesus’ declaration of Himself as “the way, the truth, and the life” not only comforted His disciples, but also launched the disciples to be people of comfort into the world. How might passages like Genesis 12:1-3 and John 14:12 support this?
6. What might it mean for Christians to be people of comfort in the world? Do you think Christians can be people of comfort and still hold on to the claim that Jesus is the only way to the Father?
7. Do you agree that for Christians to be people of comfort in the world they must first be people who can be trusted by those outside of Christianity? What does it look like for someone to trust a Christian? How can Christians develop trust with people who would not call themselves Christians?





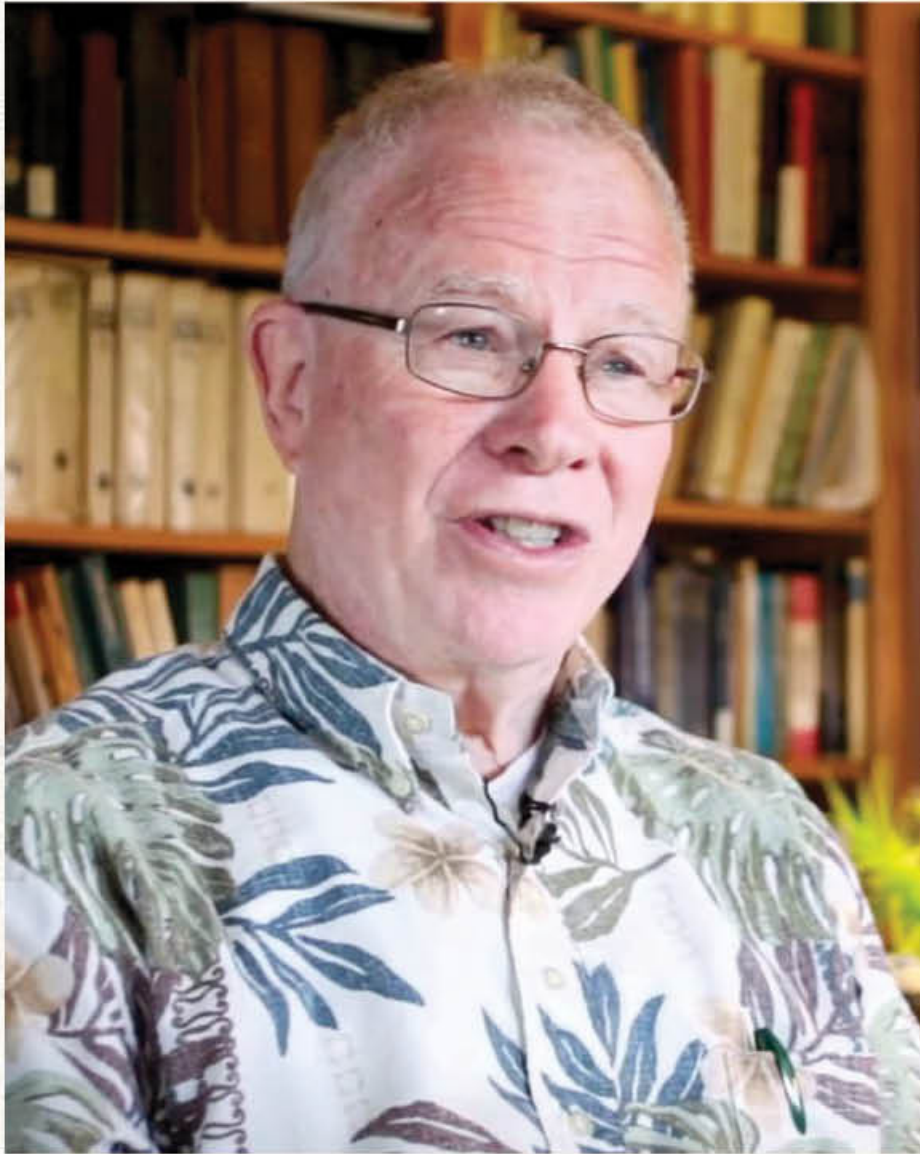
“Dear Editors: The Saturday notice of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles’ celebration with Hindus of the fact that ‘both’ faiths’ [Christianity and Hinduism] revere “great figures who embody the divine light, who teach the divine truth,” does us the service of showing why much ‘mainline’ Protestant Christianity is dying. The earliest Church refused to join Jesus with the Roman

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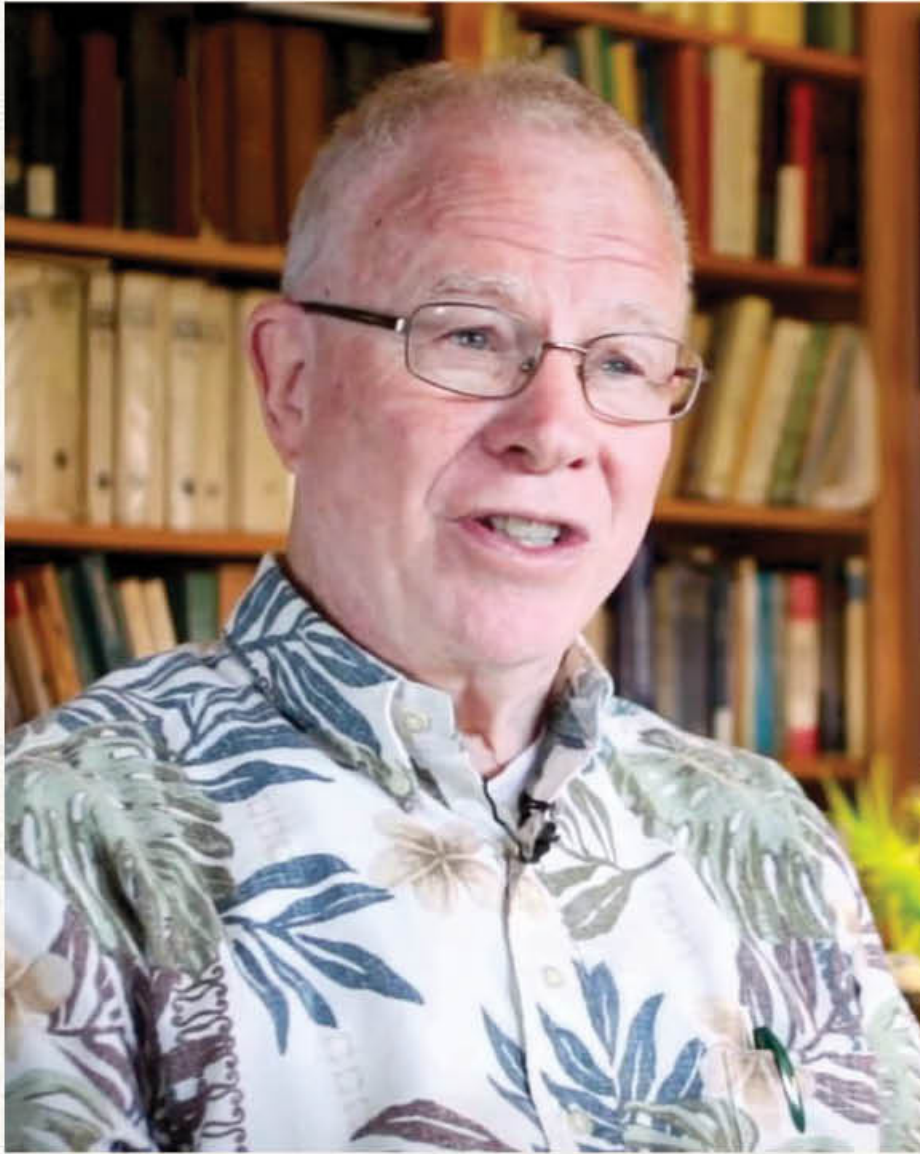
pantheon of 'great figures who embody divine light' and, as a result, she was mowed down in the coliseums of the Mediterranean world for what was felt to be her arrogant intolerance. But the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church and in three-hundred years the Roman Empire was converted. When the Church has had the guts to hold to the One God [of Israel] and to this

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One God's One Great Self-Revelation, the Messiah Jesus, and when she speaks and acts as graciously and as courageously as her Lord and his prophets in mission, she deeply helps not only [still] caste-bound Hinduism but everyone else she reaches. Look at the major hospitals all over the world, the leprosaria, the schools for women in the Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist worlds, and the

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passion for social justice that Jesus elicits wherever he is faithfully heard and followed. . . The bishop of our diocese does not need to apologize for attempts to convert people of other religions; he needs to apologize for the loss of the faith and courage to seek such conversions. Let a thousand faiths, religious and secular, speak their deep convictions in the public square, and each

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with its legitimate passion to convert; let us respectfully listen to what each has to say; and let us see who prevails. The truth can handle itself."

*F. Dale Bruner, Adult Sunday-School Teacher,
First Presbyterian Hollywood*

UNCHURCHED OF 1992

No value in attending church

74%

Churches have too many problems

61%

I do not have the time

48%

I am simply not interested

42%

Churches ask for money too frequently

40%

Church services are usually boring

36%

Christian churches hold no relevance for the way I live

34%

I do not believe in God, or I am unsure that God exists

12%

NONES OF 2007

Antihomosexual

91%

Out of touch with reality

72%

Judgmental

87%

Insensitive to others

70%

Hypocritical

85%

Boring

68%

Old-fashioned

78%

Not accepting of other faiths

64%

Too involved in politics

75%

Confusing

61%



TRUST



CURIOSITY



OPEN



SEEKING



FOLLOWER

Five Thresholds

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Nones Statistics (not on a slide)

James Emery White, *The Rise of the Nones: Understanding and Reaching the Religiously Unaffiliated* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2014), 16-17.

Quote from Dale Bruner

Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 828.

Five Thresholds

Adapted from Don Everts and Doug Shaupp, *I Once Was Lost: What Postmodern Skeptics Taught Us about Their Path to Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008),

<http://evangelism.intervarsity.org/five-thresholds>.

How NonChristians Perceive Christians

David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *UnChristians: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity and Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 34.