

Skeptic's Guide to the Universe

Study Guide - Week Four: Exclusivity



Begin by reading Genesis 6:17-18. The natural question to ask when we think about the flood, the nation of Israel, or Christians today is, “Why are some people in and some people out?” To some, God appears to pick favorites and unfairly exclude people. This tension challenges our understanding of a loving and just God. In this study, we will examine the reasoning behind the claim that God excludes people, and uncover the reality that God wants to include all people.

What Do You Think?

- Many people wrestle with the fairness of the Christian belief that Jesus is the only way to heaven. What are some of the reasons people struggle to accept this?
- World culture is moving more towards an attitude of universalism; the idea that everyone can find their own way to reconcile with God. Have you seen this mentality, and why do you think it is becoming more popular?

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” John 14:6 (ESV)

What Does God Say?

- The Bible, and Jesus Himself, is very clear about how a person is reconciled to God. **Read a few examples in John 3:16-18, John 10:7-11, John 14:1-6, and Acts 4:11-12.** What do these scriptures tell us? Would you say this is exclusive? Why or why not?
- If Jesus is the only way to heaven, what about the people who lived before He was crucified? **Read Hebrews 11:1-2, 13-16 and 39-40.** What is the common denominator for the people in this list? What does it have to do with Jesus? **After discussing, read Hebrews 12:1-3.**



“... in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,”
Ephesians 2:7-8 (ESV)

- Although some may say that Jesus being the only way to heaven is exclusive and narrow, **Ephesians 2 and 3** paints a very different picture. Read the following passages and discuss.
 - **Ephesians 2:1-10** – How does this mindset of salvation differ from the average person’s?
 - **Ephesians 2:11-22** – Based on this passage, would you call Christianity exclusive or inclusive? Why?
 - **Ephesians 3:1-12** – Knowing salvation comes only through Jesus and is available to everyone, what was Paul’s response? As the church, what should our response be?

What Will You Do?

- Mercifully, God *did* provide a path to salvation. Is that something you have taken for granted? What are some ways you can increase your level of gratitude and appreciation to God?
- Will you be part of changing the perception of Christians from being exclusive to being inclusive? Considering the example of Jesus, what are some things you can intentionally do?
- Part of the mission of The Cove Church is to introduce our friends to Jesus. We do this because we know He is the only way to salvation. We value loving God passionately, loving others unconditionally, taking the Bible seriously, being generous, staying united, and keeping it real. How do these Core Values help us to fulfill the mission to introduce our friends to Jesus? Answer both for our church and yourself as an individual.
- Would you like to be part of taking the message of Jesus to the world?
 - Serve on a team at your campus.
 - Join the launch team for a new campus.
 - Go on a global missions trip.

