

26-1007wc Neighborly Apologetics

Dr. Del Tackett's Neighborly Apologetics Webinar Series

26-1007wc - NA- 3-Only One Way & Religious Pluralism, Dr. Del Tackett

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Neighborly Apologetics Transcript

26-1007-Transcript: 3-Only 1 Way & Religious Pluralism (0:04 - 56:07)

Title: *I Am the Way, I Am the Door*, **Facilitator:** Scott Reynolds

1st Half

(0:04) Thank you, Marc, and my greetings to all of you as well. (0:08) Thank you for being here tonight, for taking time out of your busy schedules to go through this. (0:14) Tonight, we're going to be going through a pretty difficult issue together.

(0:20) And so we've been praying for you and praying that God is going to draw all of us closer and closer to Him tonight. (0:29) So I'm going to share my screen again. I've got a lot of slides for us to look at.

(0:37) And we'll pray that the Lord allows us to get through this tonight. (0:45) So as we have been going through this for who knows how long, that our overall title is Liberty Apologetics. (0:54) Tonight, we're looking at the whole idea of religious pluralism, and is Jesus really the only way? (1:03) We call it neighborly apologetics again because of the Jesus law, the royal law, that we are to love our neighbor.

(1:13) And as best as the Lord is going to allow, I'm going to spend the rest of my life doing whatever I can to help cast the vision to God's people, (1:22) that God has entrusted the primary work of the kingdom to the common Christian family, that they have a priestly role. (1:29) They're part of the royal priesthood. They have a priestly role in the neighborhood in which God has placed them.

(1:37) And part of that engaging of the neighbor is to build that deep, trusted relationship, (1:44) to be fervent in your intercessory prayer for them, and then pray that God is going to allow you in that trusted relationship (1:53) to be able to engage a conversation with them and to respond to their questions. (1:59) And if their questions then lead to one of these different categories of apologetics, (2:05) then hopefully we will be trained if you find as you're dealing with Mrs. Smith across the street (2:12) that all of a sudden you see that she has this whole issue with Jesus being the only way, (2:19) then hopefully what we're going to do tonight will help you and your family to prepare, (2:24) not simply to have the knowledge to thump Mrs. Smith with, (2:30) but the knowledge in which you

will, through love, be able to help her, hopefully, (2:35) to see some of the things that we'll be mentioning tonight. (2:41) So this is number three.

We've already gone through number nine. (2:46) Remember we went through that because we felt it was important to lay the groundwork for a lot of these other things. (2:52) And you will see tonight that we'll refer to a number of the things we talked about in that category nine.

(3:00) In particular, Jesus' claim that he was truly God in the flesh, that he was divine. (3:06) So we'll be referring to that. (3:08) So tonight we're looking at this notion of religious pluralism, and is Jesus the only way? (3:16) This is a very, very tough one to deal with.

(3:20) It isn't necessarily tough from an apologetic standpoint. (3:25) I hope you'll see that tonight. (3:28) But it's a tough one because it's tough for people to emotionally, mentally, spiritually deal with.

(3:39) And that's simply one of the reasons, because of the culture that we live in. (3:44) And so it's possible there may be some people who are on here tonight who may not be a believer. (3:50) And some of these things will grate on you.

(3:53) I pray that you will just simply remain calm and listen. (4:00) And then hopefully that truth will begin to penetrate your heart and mind as well. (4:08) We're praying for you and praying that that is what will happen.

(4:12) So when we talk about religious pluralism, we're simply talking about the belief that every religion is true. (4:19) And has provided a valid pathway to God. (4:22) There is a counterpart to that called religious relativism.

(4:27) It doesn't say that every religion is true. (4:29) It just says that there is no objective truth in any religion. (4:35) But people who believe in it, then it's true for them.

(4:40) It's not objectively true. (4:42) But if you believe in a certain religious form or premise, then that's true for you. (4:52) You don't really need to know the difference of those two except to understand that when you're talking with people.

(4:59) When your neighbor begins to talk about the issue that every religion has its own way to God. (5:06) Or that it doesn't really matter what you believe. (5:09) If you believe in Islam, then that's true for you.

(5:13) Then you'll understand that that's very contrary to the third category. (5:18) Which is religious exclusivism. (5:21) That's a claim that only one way is true and all others are false.

(5:27) Now that can even grate upon a believer at this point. (5:31) But this is, I will tell you, this is Christianity. (5:35) Christianity believes that there is only one way.

(5:37) That Jesus is the only way. (5:38) And there is no other way. (5:40) So that is what we'll be dealing with tonight.

(5:44) And I thought I would make mention of this. (5:47) Because the thing that caused us to have kind of a grating feeling when we look at that exclusive statement. (5:58) I think has a lot to do with the fact that we live in a culture that we've dealt with this before.

(6:04) That we find the prime ethic in our culture to be compassion. (6:08) But it is a malevolent compassion. (6:11) Why? Because it is not bridled by truth.

(6:12) It's not bridled by wisdom. (6:15) It's not bridled by righteousness. (6:17) And so that compassion moves us to embrace, even affirm those things which are evil.

(6:26) And in the sight of God, abominations. (6:29) And those things which will actually hurt people rather than help them. (6:33) God's compassion will also, will always be bridled.

(6:39) He's not really bridled, but his compassion will always come in a form of things that are true and good and righteous. (6:47) And so that is why he can be compassionate to us while he disciplines us. (6:53) Why? Because it is his compassion that also drives him to do those things which he knows is for our good.

(7:01) And that is why we read in Hebrews that when he does that, we then become trained by discipline. (7:10) Trained by adversity. (7:12) And so malevolent compassion will not allow us to do this.

(7:15) And so that kind of compassion will kick back at any notion that someone would be wrong. (7:23) Because that would hurt their feelings. (7:26) And so that is a part of all of this that we're talking about tonight.

(7:29) So let's look at a few charges that comes from this position. (7:35) Number one, and you probably already are thinking this, intolerance. (7:40) The charge is that people who hold to the view, for example, that Jesus is the only way, is leveled to us as if we're intolerant.

(7:51) Now, of course, one of the side notes here is that pluralists are very intolerant of exclusivists. (7:59) So it's not really a notion of tolerance here. (8:03) It's the notion of someone who's going to be intolerant of your view that Jesus is the only way.

(8:11) And the charge of being intolerant is a way to try and play a trump card with you. (8:21) It's a tough one because no one wants to be called intolerant. (8:25) Nobody wants to be called a bully.

(8:26) No one wants to be called a bigot. (8:29) And all of these other things are labeled. (8:32) But it's important for our purposes here tonight that when you're dealing with Mrs. Smith, (8:39) and hopefully you're doing this through a relationship, a trusted relationship, (8:43) she is beginning to realize that you care for her.

(8:46) And she then begins to follow the path that people do when you build a trusted relationship with them, begin to ask questions. (8:55) And those questions then lead her to talk about this issue of Jesus. (8:59) And in that conversation, if you say, well, that just sounds intolerant to me, (9:04) then hopefully at that point you may have arranged it enough with Mrs. Smith to say, you know, (9:11) actually that sounds intolerant to say that.

(9:13) And hopefully at that point your relationship is allowed to say those things and understand that. (9:20) Narrow-mindedness is the same as a charge that is leveled. (9:24) It's a lot like intolerance, but it's another way to say that.

(9:29) And the reality is that pluralism is also very narrow. (9:32) It has the same kind of narrow view that they would charge us with, say they do not allow people like us. (9:43) And the other thing

that we dealt with the last time when we were talking about truth, that all truth is narrow.

(9:49) I mean, that is almost one of the definitions, the characteristics of truth. (9:53) It is narrow. (9:55) Truth does not say that the grass is green and orange at the same time.

(10:01) That up is not down and good is not evil. (10:06) Truth is narrow by its definition. (10:09) So the third one is that, and you probably wouldn't hear these words, (10:14) but this is how academic apologetics would state it, and I think it's worth us understanding, (10:20) that there is a charge of intellectual imperialism associated with this position that Jesus is the only way.

(10:31) And they would claim that those ideas of exclusiveness, even truth and meaning, are even labeled as fascist. (10:40) And you will see that today. (10:42) That term is thrown around a lot for people who do not sway in their position that certain things are wrong (10:49) or that certain things are evil or wicked or so forth.

(10:54) Oftentimes there will be a charge of fascism as a result of that. (11:00) And so first we'll claim that truth should be more democratic. (11:03) We dealt with this last time that truth is not derived by 51% of the vote.

(11:11) In fact, 51% of people can be wrong. (11:14) So it is not, there is not a democratic process that leads us to truth. (11:20) But when a culture walks away from truth, when we walk away from God, (11:25) when we walk away from the foundations of absolute truth, (11:28) then they have to find some way to be able to ascertain what is right and what is wrong.

(11:35) And sometimes in a culture that will be like in ours where democracy will be used as a means to do that. (11:43) Just as a note that in many Hindu cultures in the past it was their religious practice (11:55) if a man died to burn his widow along with him. (12:01) Those are the kind of things hopefully that people will be able to see there's something not right about that (12:08) even though 90% of the people in that culture follow that pattern or believe that, (12:15) that there's something wrong with that.

(12:17) And we'll deal with that here now in the presuppositions associated with plurals. (12:23) Now that's just a big word. (12:24) It means what are these truth claims that are kind of buried and hidden (12:28) behind a position of religious pluralism or that Jesus can't be the only way.

(12:36) One of the things that's very interesting about this position is that there's something truly moral (12:41) that transcends each religion and that people will say, (12:46) well if you look at all these religions they each have kindness, they each want to love. (12:52) What they're doing is they have a priori established that there are certain absolute moral values (13:00) that these religions have and that goes against the presupposition of naturalism. (13:10) So there's a conflict here.

(13:12) I'm just talking about a way as you talk with Mrs. Smith to ask her some questions (13:18) that might reveal to her that okay, I think I'm really inconsistent there (13:22) because a lot of religious pluralism rests upon a naturalistic philosophy. (13:29) And the reason for that is because it will discount the miracles of Jesus, (13:34) the resurrection, anything supernatural. (13:39) And yet, as the first point says, there is a background in which they will attempt (13:48) to try and pull out moral absolutes.

(13:51) So these are just some of the contradictions that you will see in the presuppositions (13:56) associated with religious pluralism. (14:00) This is another one that is very, very interesting. (14:03)

The world is religiously ambiguous.

(14:07) And all that means is that you really can't know the truth. (14:11) And so you have all these religions. (14:14) They're all different, even though the contradiction is that we'll say they all lead to Rome.

(14:21) But they will say they're all different. (14:23) The reason is because you really can't know the truth. (14:26) And so all these religions are just ambiguous.

(14:29) They're all going after certain amorphous things. (14:34) And the truth can't really be known. (14:37) And oftentimes religious pluralists will eventually get to the point where, you know, (14:44) dialogue is the only way to truth.

(14:46) And so we need to get all these religious people together so that we can come to (14:49) some common denominator here. (14:53) We have classes that talk about all of these religions in such a way that we can help people (15:01) become tolerant as they read all of these things. (15:03) Now, tolerance is an important part of Christianity.

(15:06) But tolerance does not lead us to deny what is true. (15:11) Tolerance is part of a kindness and love that is extended to people. (15:17) But that love and kindness is not an unbridled love and kindness.

(15:23) The last one there is that relativism is true, which we've already talked about in our (15:28) previous time together, that this is a self-defeating argument. (15:33) If someone says that relativism is true, then they are stating that there is no truth, (15:41) and that's absolutely true. (15:42) There are no absolute truths.

(15:43) But what's absolutely true is that there's an absolute truth anyway. (15:47) So you get wrapped around the axle on that. (15:49) And, again, these are some of the ways to help you and your family to discuss some of (15:57) the presumptions that are maybe floating around in Mrs. Smith and, therefore, (16:03) the things that she's struggling with, and how can we help her, (16:07) and how can we pray for her.

(16:09) And so, therefore, here are some of the problems associated with this position. (16:16) One of the questions that you may ask directly, you may not. (16:19) It may be the basis for asking some other questions, perfect questions, (16:24) but what is the basis for the truth claim that all religions are the same? (16:28) In other words, pluralism will say all religions are the same.

(16:34) Well, that's a truth claim. (16:36) Where does that truth claim come from? (16:39) Why do you make that truth claim? (16:41) What is it that brings you to that position? (16:45) It can be a very discerning question to ask. (16:51) The second one, if the claim of both and is true, in other words, pluralism will say, (17:00) yeah, all of these religions are the same.

(17:02) If that claim is true rather than an either or, then that puts us in this position, (17:08) as we talked about last time, of embracing contradictions (17:14) and going against the law of non-contradiction, as we talked about, again, last time. (17:20) So we can end up with saying that, you know, you can have square circles, (17:25) you can have one-way streets that go both ways. (17:28) You can't have that.

(17:29) Our whole world operates on a position of truth that is not contradictory. (17:39) So Hindu

pantheism, for example, is totally contrary to Christian theism. (17:46) They're mutually exclusive.

(17:48) And I would say that one of the fundamental essences, (17:53) the essence fundamentally of Hinduism is pantheism. (17:57) And one of the fundamental essence of Christianity is its view of God and theism. (18:03) Those are mutually exclusive.

(18:06) So it's hard to say that they're all the same. (18:10) Islam denies that Jesus died and rose again. (18:16) Christianity proclaims that.

(18:18) When we talked about the resurrection, we said that is the key apologetic in Christianity. (18:22) So here we have Islam and Christianity. (18:25) There are odds, and mutually exclusive.

(18:29) They both can't be true of one of the key apologetics and true claims of Christianity. (18:35) So anyway, there are lots of ways to have a discussion with Mrs. Smith, (18:40) who would say that all religions are the same, (18:44) and say, well, do you think Islam and Christianity are the same, (18:47) and then be able to say they have this fundamental huge difference (18:52) with one of the key issues, if not the key position of Christianity. (18:57) So that's what that is about. (19:00)

2nd Half

(19:00) So let's deal with the saying, is Jesus the only way? (19:07) The question, is Jesus the only way? (19:09) Because that is really at the heart of all of this. (19:12) A lot of people talk about religion, quote, religion. (19:18) They're all the same and so forth.

(19:20) But the heart of that is the question, is Jesus the only way? (19:26) And so I did a number of years ago, I did a series entitled, Who is Jesus? (19:34) And part nine of that series was entitled, Is Jesus the Only Way? (19:41) And so I went back, I was looking at those slides, (19:44) and I said, you know, I'm not sure I can recreate those any better, (19:50) so I'm just going to walk through some of those slides with you here. (19:55) And again, we talked about the big question that we've dealt with, (19:59) that's why we dealt with category number nine, is Jesus God? (20:04) Is Jesus divine? Is he God in the flesh? (20:08) And did he declare that? And we went through all of that. (20:13) We tried to form a good basis for you to help Mrs. Smith know that Jesus clearly made this claim.

(20:22) This was not something that was made by people later on. (20:25) This was Jesus making this claim. (20:28) Okay, that's the big question.

(20:30) The hard question is, is Jesus the only way? (20:34) And that is what we're going to deal with now. (20:37) And the reason it's the hard question is because, sorry for the sound effects, (20:42) but these phrases that are thrown at us are phrases that we don't like. (20:49) No one likes to be called a bigot.

(20:50) No one likes to be called narrow-minded. (20:53) And people can look at you, you know, with that side slant of hatred (21:00) when you talk about that Jesus is the only way. (21:06) And so that's why it becomes a hard question.

(21:08) And it becomes a hard question also because of the culture we live in. (21:14) That's why we talked about malevolent compassion. (21:17) So these are some things you might hear from your neighbor.

(21:20) How could anyone assert that Jesus is the only way to God? (21:24) How can Christians be so sure that they're right and everyone else is wrong? (21:29) It's arrogant to think that Jesus is the only way. (21:31) There are many religions in the world that essentially teach the same thing. (21:35) Christianity is intolerant because it thinks it's the only true religion.

(21:39) All religious paths lead to God. (21:40) No religion can claim to be the only one. (21:43) I just can't buy the arrogance of Christianity when it thinks it has a lock on truth.

(21:48) So you think you're right and all good Buddhists are going to hell? (21:52) What about my atheist neighbor? (21:54) He's a good husband, a great father, and a great friend. (21:57) How about the nice guy who grows up in the jungle of Africa (22:00) and never hears about Jesus? (22:01) So these are some typical questions that you might hear from your neighbor. (22:06) And let me tell you, don't slough these off.

(22:10) They're not easy questions. (22:12) And they're not easy questions because your neighbor isn't just asking those, (22:19) in most cases, to try and trick you up. (22:21) They're asking those questions because they really feel those questions.

(22:28) So the easiest thing to do at this point, and believe me, I know I feel it as well, (22:34) the

easiest thing to do is to say, oh, well, I'm not saying that Jesus is the only way. (22:38) Because if you said that, then all of a sudden all the negative words, (22:44) all the negative things, it all just goes away. (22:46) You can make it all go away if you just simply say, (22:49) well, I'm not saying that Jesus is the only way, (22:53) but that's not what we hold, and that's not what Jesus taught.

(22:57) And that's what we're going to be dealing with here tonight. (23:01) So this is not new. (23:02) The early Christians faced the same thing.

(23:04) We've mentioned this before. (23:05) I'll mention it again. (23:08) The Christians were not persecuted in the early days because they believed in Jesus.

(23:12) That wasn't why they were hated. (23:16) They were hated not because they believed in Jesus. (23:20) They were hated because they didn't accept the other gods, because Jesus was the only way.

(23:25) That was the reason they got thrown into the pit, into the arena. (23:32) And today, there's really not a whole lot of difference, (23:36) because you can be thrown into the social arena, so to speak. (23:40) You can be thrown out of the social arena.

(23:45) You can be shunned. (23:46) In many cases now, increasingly, you can be economically hurt as a result of these positions. (23:57) So we're not just talking about an academic issue here.

(24:01) We're talking about a real, real issue. (24:04) The world does not want you to say that Jesus is the only way. (24:12) They want you to say that Jesus is a way, not the way.

(24:19) Tim Keller stated this in his book, *The Reason for God*. (24:23) During my nearly two decades in New York City, I've had numerous opportunities to ask people, (24:27) what is your biggest problem with Christianity? (24:29) What troubles you the most about its beliefs or how it is practiced? (24:33) One of the most frequent answers I've heard over the years can be summed up in one word, exclusivity. (24:42) So in reality, the essence of the pushback, the essence of the problems that people have, (24:55) can be summed up in the fact that you say Jesus is the only way.

(25:03) Mahatma Gandhi said, the soul of religion is one, but is encased in a multitude of forms. (25:10) Okay, that's a religious, pluralistic statement. (25:16) Mahatma Gandhi stated he was informed and influenced by Christianity, (25:26) but he held on to that pluralistic form.

(25:29) President Obama, Jesus is the only way for me, but I'm not in a position to judge other people. (25:35) So this reverts back to that religious relativism that we talked about before. (25:42) And then this comes from the Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* 16 [audio: Pope Paul II], (25:53) which taught that people who sincerely seek God and strive to do his will according to their conscience (25:59) can be saved even if they do not know the gospel of Christ.

(26:04) So here is a pluralistic statement that basically said Jesus is not the only way. (26:10) There are other ways to God. (26:14) When Charles Gibson interviewed President George W. Bush, (26:19) he asked the question, we all worship the same God, Christians and Muslims.

(26:24) And of course, this is at the height, after 9-11, and there's all this going on. (26:30) And the President responded, I think we do. (26:33) We have different routes of getting to the Almighty.

(26:36) So this is a statement of religious pluralism. (26:40) Gibson said, do Christians and non-

Christians and Muslims go to heaven in your mind? (26:44) Yes, they do. (26:45) We have different routes of getting there.

(26:48) So this is the easy way forward in terms of trying to fit in with the culture around us. (26:59) In the early Christian days, it was the easy way. (27:01) You could get past being persecuted by the Romans if you would just say, (27:07) no, I don't think Jesus is the only way.

(27:09) All these other gods are equally valid, then you're fine. (27:13) And the same is true in our culture today. (27:17) That stating that Jesus is the only way will get you called all these names as well.

(27:22) So there is this push that you'll see bumper stickers that coexist, (27:28) that movement that will lead us towards thinking that all of these religions, (27:35) and there are a lot of them, and there are some of them that don't include the major ones, (27:40) but here are some of the many, many, many religions that exist today that have been formalized. (27:48) There are a lot of religions. (27:50) And so the accusation is with all of these religions, (27:53) isn't it arrogant to think that yours is the only one out of all of these religions that's right? (28:01) So, I mean, I don't know if you can see some of these, (28:04) but, you know, they go from Dianic witchcraft to the occult experiences.

(28:11) There's the Haters group. (28:15) There's the demonology group. (28:18) There are all kinds of them.

(28:21) So one of the, I think, very important questions for you to at least ponder of when it's the right time to ask, (28:30) Mrs. Smith, if this is the position is, do you think any of these are wrong? (28:36) It's a very, very interesting question. (28:39) Because if you were able to help them to go away from just the well-known religions (28:45) and help them see that, look, there are tons of religions out there. (28:51) They may not have the size, but they're religions.

(28:56) So do you think that, you know, demonology, for example, and the things that they practice, (29:02) do you think any of these are wrong? (29:05) Well, what that's going to do is all of a sudden cause someone to stop (29:11) and have to ponder this question that maybe my statement, all these religions are the same (29:20) and they're all ways to heaven when you really, truly look at these religions. (29:25) And there are religions that worship Satan, (29:29) and there are religions that do things that it's possible Smith would say, (29:33) that's absolutely wrong. (29:35) Well, okay, so all of a sudden now we have a basis to say, (29:39) well, then not all religions are true.

(29:43) Not all religions are right and good. (29:48) That's a good starting point for us. (29:51) So how do we deal with this question? (29:54) Because it isn't easy.

(29:56) It doesn't logically make sense as the first way for us to begin to think about this. (30:03) And of course, this again brings us back to this issue associated with what happens (30:10) when you're dealing with Mrs. Smith, (30:14) that you don't want to say to her, well, Mrs. Smith, what you're saying is stupid. (30:20) Or, you know, that doesn't logically make sense.

(30:24) You might be able to say something like that if you have that trusted relationship with her, (30:29) but this is more important for us and your family to recognize. (30:33) Why? (30:34) Because oftentimes Christians ourselves are dealing with this issue. (30:39) You may be dealing with this issue yourself.

(30:40) You may not be comfortable with this topic tonight. (30:45) So this is for us as well as Mrs. Smith. (30:50) So this first point is that if we think this through, (30:54) it doesn't logically make sense to say that all of these roads lead to the same place, (31:02) all religions are the same.

(31:03) So I'd like for us to listen to Lee Strobel for a second. [clip] (31:08) It does not make any sense that God would go to one part of the world and say, hey, here's who I am. (31:13) I'm a triune God.

(31:15) Jesus is my son. (31:16) You come to me through repentance and faith. (31:19) It is a gift of grace.

(31:20) And then he goes to another part of the world and says, yeah, yeah, yeah, that's not true. (31:23) Actually, my name is Allah, and I don't have a son, and I am transcendent, and I am aloof, and I am distant. (31:31) And you get to me through a works-based mentality.

(31:35) And then he goes to another part of the world and says, yeah, yeah, yeah, that's not true. (31:38) And he says something else. (31:39) If he did that, God would be schizophrenic.

(31:44) It makes sense that there would be a reality about who God is, (31:48) and that we, through his revelation, would be able to discover that. (31:52) It does not make sense that there would be multiple beliefs about God that are all contradictory with each other (32:00) and are somehow equally true. (32:02) That's logically ridiculous.

(32:05) So what Lee is saying here is really important for us to ponder. (32:10) For those religions that claim that God has given them these directives and so forth, (32:18) it's a really important question to say, why are they so radically different? (32:24) If they come from the same God, why are they so radically different? (32:28) So reality here is our best friend because we live in a very one-way world, (32:35) which is also another way to help people understand that we shouldn't be so deeply struck (32:43) by how wrong it is for someone to think that this is one way because we live in a lot of one-way things. (32:52) You can't explain to the officer that, well, I know the sign said one way this way, (32:59) but that's bigotry.

(33:04) That's exclusivity, and that's wrong. (33:09) Or we have a way to print money, and we do everything we can to make sure that somebody doesn't counterfeit that bill. (33:21) What we're trying to do is to look, there's only one bill.

(33:24) There's only one way for a \$100 bill or a \$10 bill to be valid in this country, (33:30) and we're going to make sure that you understand you can't bring a pluralistic view when it comes to money. (33:36) And if you own a gas station, you can't bring a pluralistic view to make up your own size of a gallon (33:44) so that you can sell gasoline to somebody with a gallon that's one-third of the size of the real gallon and sell it as a gallon. (33:53) We don't live that way.

(33:56) We have scales. (33:58) You can't make the argument, well, I decided that red means gold (34:04) or that a pound doesn't mean a pound. (34:07) So we live in a world where water flows down.

(34:10) You can't say, well, I want water to flow up, or I don't like the fact that water flows down. (34:17) There's something wrong with that. (34:18) This is the world we live in, and that's the nature of truth.

(34:21) We've talked about that. (34:23) So these are some of the things that are important for us in a

family, in our families, (34:28) to talk about truth itself, the nature of truth, because that's important for us. (34:34) Now, when we come to this question and the accusations that are thrown at us to help us realize, (34:41) look, we're standing on reality here.

(34:44) When we talk about the fact that Jesus said he was the only way, that is not contrary to the entire world around us. (34:53) In fact, it actually fits in to the world around us. (34:57) Pluralism does not fit in that world as easily as exclusivity does.

(35:05) So the second way to deal with this is probably the most important, and that is that we are not making it exclusive. (35:16) Jesus is the one who made it exclusive. (35:18) So your argument is not with me.

(35:22) Your argument is with Jesus. (35:24) And so I'd like you to listen to Greg Koukl. [clip] (35:27) One of the most powerful ways to demonstrate that Jesus is the only way of salvation (35:31) and get people off your back regarding the tolerance issue is to simply say, (35:37) look, I didn't make this up.

(35:39) That's not my idea that Jesus is the only way. (35:42) I might not even be comfortable with that. (35:45) Jesus said it.

(35:46) And he said it time and time and time and time again. (35:49) And not only did he say it, but all of the people he trained to follow after him, who wrote about him, (35:54) they all said the same thing. (35:56) This was his message.

(35:57) Now, if I'm a follower of Jesus, I'm going to say what he said. (36:03) Now, since he's the one saying it, if you're upset about that, you have to take it up with him. (36:08) The problem is that it's easy to dismiss me.

(36:12) It's a lot harder to dismiss Jesus of Nazareth because he was a person to be contended with. (36:19) A lot of people like Jesus. (36:21) Most people do.

(36:23) So when Jesus said he was the only way, he's the authority to make that claim. (36:28) Deal with him. (36:29) You think he was wrong? (36:31) Do you think he was wrong? (36:34) That's the question to ask him.

(36:36) Now that changes the dynamic of the conversation, doesn't it? (36:41) And once, of course, we begin to do that, we're now talking about the statements that Jesus made. (36:49) And the question is, as Greg put it, do you think he was wrong? (36:55) Or do you think Jesus was a liar? (36:57) Do you think Jesus was trying to deceive? (37:01) Because it is clear this is what Jesus thought. (37:04) In Matthew 11, all things have been handed over to me by my Father.

(37:07) And no one knows the Son except the Father. (37:10) And no one knows the Father except the Son. (37:14) And anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

(37:18) In John 6, for my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life. (37:26) And I will raise them up at the last day. (37:29) In Matthew 10, everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven.

(37:36) But whoever denies me before men, I also will deny him before my Father who is in heaven.

(37:46) John 14, Jesus said to them, I am the way and the truth and the life. (37:50) I am.

I am the way, the truth, and the life. (37:53) No one comes to the Father except through me. (37:58) And this is why Greg was saying, and why Christians have been saying from the very beginning, (38:04) when they decided that they were going to face the fire in the Roman arena, (38:11) that they were not going to back down from saying that Jesus is the only way.

(38:17) Why? Because the Lord and Savior said that. (38:20) He taught that. (38:22) He obviously believed that.

(38:24) And as he did, the resurrection proved who he was and that they believed it as well. (38:32) And we should believe it. (38:34) In John 3, our famous passage, although we never get past the first part of it, (38:41) is, As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, (38:46) that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

(38:49) For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, (38:51) that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (38:56) For God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, (38:59) but in order that the world might be saved through him. (39:02) Whoever believes in him is not condemned, (39:06) but whoever does not believe is condemned already, (39:10) because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

(39:16) So Jesus made the exclusivity real. (39:23) He spoke it. He taught it.

He believed it. (39:26) And that is the reality. It is the reality.

(39:29) He is the only way to the Father. (39:33) He said he was the only way. (39:35) And he declared that the other way was not the way, (39:37) that it was a false way.

(39:39) Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, (39:43) but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. (39:49) I am the door. (39:50) If anyone enters by me, he will be saved.

(39:55) This is an incredible passage by Jesus. (39:58) He says, look, I am the only way. I am the only door.

(40:02) If you try to get in by another way, you are a thief and a robber. (40:07) I know that wouldn't fly today. (40:09) And you and I know that wouldn't fly today, (40:11) but that's what Jesus said.

(40:14) Beware false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, (40:16) but inwardly are ravenous wolves. (40:19) Many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. (40:22) For false christs and false prophets will arise (40:24) and perform many great signs and wonders.

(40:27) So as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. (40:29) Jesus was saying, look, there are people. (40:32) There are going to be religions.

(40:33) There will be false prophets. (40:34) People will come and say they are the way. (40:37) And he says to us that they are not true prophets (40:42) and they're leading you astray.

(40:45) Jesus is not embracing the fact. (40:47) Well, you know, they have another route. (40:48) That's okay.

(40:49) You know, there's another false one. (40:51) There's another prophet over there. (40:52) He's going to show you another way.

(40:54) There'll be other, other teachers who come. (40:56) They'll show you another way. (40:57) That is not what Jesus is saying.

(41:00) He's saying they're going to come (41:01) and they're going to lay out all kinds of different paths, (41:04) different religions, and so forth. (41:06) And there are false ones that are leading you astray. (41:13) And the disciples didn't misunderstand.

(41:15) In 1 Corinthians, Paul writes, (41:17) for although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth, (41:20) yet for us there is one God, the Father, (41:24) from whom are all things and for whom we exist, (41:28) and one Lord, Jesus Christ, (41:31) through whom are all things and through whom we exist. (41:35) In Acts 4, rulers of the people and elders, (41:38) this is Peter, (41:40) rulers of the people and elders, (41:42) if we are being examined today concerning a good deed (41:44) done to a crippled man by what means this man has been healed, (41:47) let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel (41:50) that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, (41:53) whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, (41:56) by him this man is standing before you well. (41:59) This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, (42:03) the builders, which has become the cornerstone, (42:05) and there is salvation in no one else.

(42:11) For there is no other name under heaven given among men (42:18) by which we must be saved. (42:21) Jesus was clear about this. (42:23) The disciples were clear about this.

(42:26) Jesus was the only way. (42:29) Now, we struggle with this because we think, (42:32) I believe we end up thinking too little of Jesus (42:36) and too little of what he did. (42:39) And along with that, we begin to think too much of ourselves.

(42:45) And we dealt with this in the Engagement Project. (42:48) We're trying to help all of us understand the depth (42:51) of what it means for Jesus to have been the atonement (42:56) for our sins. (42:58) There's no other major religion that makes the claim (43:01) of the atonement of Jesus, (43:04) that Jesus was going to die for our sins.

(43:09) If Jesus is only one of many ways, (43:12) then what other ways could satisfy the wrath of a holy God? (43:17) I mean, this is a very important question for you to ponder, (43:22) and maybe at some point be able to ponder with Mrs. Smith. (43:27) And if there are many, many other ways, (43:30) at least as a third one, you know, (43:32) then why did Jesus die? (43:35) Why did God go through this horrific sending of his son (43:44) and having him scourged and beaten and nailed to a cross, (43:49) dying a horrible death? (43:50) Why did he do this if there are many other ways, (43:54) a whole lot easier for people to get to God? (43:58) In many other ways, why did he go through this? (44:01) It doesn't make any sense at all. (44:06) So when Mrs. Smith asks, (44:08) well, all religious roads lead to the same place, (44:12) then you might say, well, tell me about that place.

(44:15) Tell me about the place that you think all of these roads lead to. (44:19) All major religions are equally valid (44:21) and basically teach the same thing and worship the same God. (44:25) Well, tell me about those same things.

(44:28) Tell me about that God, the same God. (44:31) Let's talk about that. (44:33) Jesus never intended for his followers to make him exclusive.

(44:36) This was just a power move by them. (44:38) Well, can I share some of his statements with you? (44:41) Let's look at some of them. (44:43) Each religion sees part of the spirit of truth, (44:46) but none of them can see the whole truth.

(44:47) Okay, well, then what is that whole truth? (44:50) All belief is rooted in social constructs (44:53) and can't really be truth. (44:56) Okay, so if you're born in Morocco, (44:58) you might be saying the opposite of this, right, (45:00) because you're in another social construct (45:04) that sees all of this differently. (45:06) That would mean that what you're saying right now, (45:08) that all belief is rooted in social constructs, (45:10) is merely the product of your own social construct, (45:13) and so that can't be really true, right? (45:17) It is arrogant to insist your religion is right (45:19) and to convert others to it.

(45:21) Well, isn't it arrogant to believe this as well? (45:26) There can't be only one absolute way. (45:27) Why not? (45:28) Our world is full of absolutes, as we were talking about. (45:31) So we reviewed that the big question is Jesus God.

(45:35) Can the answer to the big question (45:37) help us with the answer to the hard question, (45:39) is Jesus the only way? (45:41) And I think it can. (45:44) And we can go back and talk about that, (45:46) about what it means for Jesus to declare himself to be divine. (45:52) So what is the problem with that answer? (45:54) Well, Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

(45:59) I am God. There is no other. (46:03) Let us make man in our image.

(46:06) He has become like one of us. (46:07) Let us go down and confuse. (46:09) This is the reality that God is a socially complex being.

(46:14) Jesus is God in the flesh. (46:17) If Jesus is merely man, he's one of billions. (46:21) If he's a prophet, he's one of dozens.

(46:23) If he's the founder, he's one of many. (46:26) If he's just a good man, there's one among a pantheon of deities. (46:32) But if he's... (46:34) If there's only one God and Jesus is that God, (46:37) and he says that he's the only way, (46:40) then there is no other.

(46:42) So the higher you see Jesus, the more the only way makes sense. (46:45) The lower one sees Jesus, the less it makes sense. (46:48) There's no middle ground.

(46:51) Jesus is either with me or against me. (46:54) So, which is it? (46:56) So logic and reality of friends, (46:59) don't let people make you think that the author... (47:05) Don't let people make you the author of Jesus' exclusivity. (47:08) If you're the problem, you're an insufficient answer to it.

(47:14) Jesus then becomes a liar. (47:17) If Jesus claims he is God, (47:18) he has authority and proves to back it up. (47:22) It's still a really tough question, (47:24) especially if you're on a show with Oprah.

(47:28) So I'm going to play this clip, (47:30) and you can see how hard it is. (47:33) The panel has been discussing the spirituality and the forces of God, (47:37) but I also believe that there are two forces that are here with us, (47:41) that we do have our God that we can depend on, (47:45) but there is also a power of darkness (47:47) that makes me aware of, (47:53) and that's where the choice begins. (47:54) Do you believe that you can choose between one or the other? (47:58) Absolutely.

(47:59) Yes. (48:00) There is a woman who says in her book, (48:02) *Return to Love*, (48:03) that we're always walking in the direction of one or the other, (48:06) that all of your actions in life, (48:08) either you're moving towards the darkness (48:10) or you're moving towards the light. (48:11) She calls this fear and love.

(48:12) There's this wonderful book called *Ishmael* by Daniel Quinn, (48:16) which is the gorilla talking, but anyway. (48:19) It talks about one of the points it brings out (48:22) is one of the mistakes that human beings make (48:24) is believing that there is only one way to live, (48:27) and that we don't accept that there are diverse ways of being in the world, (48:31) that there are millions of ways to be a human being, (48:35) and many paths to what you call God, (48:39) that her path might be something else, (48:42) and when she gets there, she might call it the light. (48:44) But her loving and her kindness and her generosity, (48:47) if it brings her to the same point that it brings you, (48:50) it doesn't matter whether she called it God along the way or not.

(48:52) And I guess the danger that could be in that, (48:54) I mean, it sounds great on the onset, (48:56) but if you really look at both sides, (48:58) there could possibly be just one way. (49:01) What about Jesus? (49:05) You say there isn't only one way. (49:08) There is one way and only one way, (49:11) and that is through Jesus.

(49:12) There's some possibility we can all do the same thing. (49:16) Because you say, you intellectualize it and say there isn't. (49:20) If you don't believe that, you're all buying into the lie.

(49:24) You think that if you are somewhere on the planet, (49:30) and you never hear the name of Jesus, (49:33) you never hear the name of Jesus, (49:35) but yet you live with a loving heart, (49:36) you live as Jesus would have had you to live, (49:39) you live for the same purpose that Jesus came to the planet to teach us all, (49:42) but you are in some remote part of the earth, (49:44) and you never heard the name of Jesus. (49:46) You cannot get to heaven, you think, and have to cut it. (49:50) Well, okay.

(49:52) So it's not an easy question. (49:54) It's a tough question. (49:56) And you may find yourself in those situations.

(50:00) What I would really love for us if we had the circumstances were different, (50:05) if we were in a classroom or something, (50:08) I would ask the question, how would you handle that? (50:14) And, again, what we're hoping and praying is that we're going to handle it (50:18) through a trusted relationship, (50:21) backed with fervent, sincere, intercessory prayer. (50:26) We're not going to be dealing with this on the set with Oprah, (50:31) but we're going to be dealing with this in the living room (50:35) with an individual that we have built a trusted relationship with. (50:39) They know that we care for them.

(50:42) But if, for example, Mrs. Smith makes a statement, (50:47) all roads lead to Rome, how would you handle it? (50:51) And maybe this is something that you could discuss among yourselves. (50:58) You know, I might respond to Mrs. Smith and say, (51:02) well, you know, I've been to a lot of places where there are roads that don't lead to Rome. (51:12) You know, I-80 doesn't lead to Rome.

(51:15) Route 1 in Iceland doesn't lead to Rome. (51:18) It's a circle route. (51:20) It goes around and around.

(51:21) You can go on that road for all of your life and never get to Rome. (51:26) So the point is that, okay, that's a nice statement, (51:31) and a lot of people make that statement. (51:34) But the reality

is that statement isn't true.

(51:37) And we're not dealing with just a destination here. (51:42) We're dealing with Rome. (51:43) We're dealing with destinations that are so different, (51:46) like the difference between Rome and the Mariana Trench or the moon.

(51:53) And so the question is, do we have any inclination that to get to God there is only one way? (52:08) And, yes, we do. (52:10) From Jesus himself, it was proven by his resurrection, (52:14) and here are the statements that he made. (52:18) Anyway, I hope that you would have an opportunity to think through those things, (52:27) because when people make these statements, it's true that the only statement they can really make that's true (52:36) is they can say that all religions except Christianity lead to the same place.

(52:44) Now, that's not really true, and we could spend the time talking about other religions. (52:48) I've put up a whole list of those there, and I guarantee you they're not headed in the same direction. (52:54) But when we talk about some religions, people might say, well, they're all headed in the same place.

(53:01) But it would be safe to say that may be true for those, (53:05) but you would have to say except for Christianity, (53:08) because Christianity does not lead to the same place as others. (53:15) And that's part of this notion of speaking about Jesus being the only way. (53:21) It's a tough thing to say, especially in our culture, that exclusivity is not received well in our culture.

(53:30) And that is why I believe that the royal law calls us to deal with these issues not in the public square (53:39) as much as we deal with those in the context of a trusted relationship, (53:45) with a background of deep, fervent intercessory prayer, (53:52) and the love and concern that Jesus calls us to do. (53:58) Okay, so that's number three. (54:02) Number four, that will be our next task when we get together, (54:06) will be to look at the whole category of faith and reason when it comes to neighborly apologetics.

(54:15) And I hope I'll be able to see you there. (54:20) So, Marc, I'm going to turn this back over to you at this point. (54:25) Thank you, Dr. Tackett.

(54:27) And just a reminder for those of you who came in a little bit late, (54:30) we did record our presentation today, livestream. (54:33) I'll be sending that link out probably early tomorrow at some point, along with Dr. Tackett's slides. (54:41) So if you are looking forward to be able to go back through the scriptures (54:45) and many of the points that Dr. Tackett made, you'll have that in PDF format.

(54:52) We'll also post the link to next month's registration. (54:57) And so, again, we're really grateful that you took the time to be with us today. (55:03) And with that, I think, Dr. Tackett, any last comments or notes? (55:07) Otherwise, I'll ask you to close our time in prayer.

(55:11) No, again, thank you all for being here tonight. (55:14) I pray the Lord is going to use that somehow in your relationships with your neighbors. (55:19) So let's pray.

(55:20) Father, thank you for your goodness and kindness to us. (55:24) Thank you for the Lord Jesus. (55:28) Thank you for the very clear statements that he made to us about who he was, about the only way for us.

(55:39) And we pray, Father, that you would give us these opportunities with our neighbors through a deep relationship, (55:45) through our loving and kindness and the way we interact with them to build a trusted relationship. (55:53) In those relationships, we might be able to discuss these things and respond to their questions for us. (56:00) All for your glory, in Jesus' name.

Amen. (56:02) Amen. All right.

Thanks, everyone. We'll see you next month. (56:06) God bless. (56:07)