

Is Christianity irrelevant?

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Before you can answer any question about being irrelevant, I think you must define what “irrelevant” means. One might define it as being too small to matter. Dealing with numbers is a game sometimes, but one could make a point that anything less than one percent—or whatever percentage you determine—is irrelevant or insignificant.

The dictionary has another definition: not relating to the matter or subject at hand. By that definition, relevance or irrelevance is dependant on whatever “the subject at hand” might be. But it also means that someone decides what is relevant and what is not for “the matter or subject at hand.”

Then relevance and irrelevance become moving targets. For example, quantum physics is irrelevant to the carpenter measuring two-by-fours. But quantum physics becomes relevant in the world of physics. Or reverse the example. Accurately measuring materials for building is irrelevant to the physicist, unless he is remodeling his house. It is keenly relevant to any carpenter or anyone with a fix-up project.

So what is the important matter at hand? Once we ask that question, we may begin floating on the sea of preferences, opinions, and subjective worldviews. Maybe the question about relevance is irrelevant. Sorry for the word play. But I would suggest that relevance and irrelevance are important to the Christian church in our world today—vitaly important.

I’m concerned that we have lost our voice as Christians because we have not been focusing on what is important. Yes, some would say that what is important to me is unimportant to everyone else. But I will contend that there is something that is important to everyone whether you’re Lutheran, Catholic, Methodist, Muslim, or Hindu.

If you are an average reader, it would have taken you about a minute and a half to read the paragraphs above: 90 seconds. During that time about 160 people in this world have died.

“What a morbid thought,” you think. Yes, that’s true. We don’t want to think about such things. We spend money to look young, think young, stay young, and deny the reality that faces us all. We want to avoid the thought. Even most of our dreams do not end with our deaths. The mind has a way to avoid death even in our subconscious. But

life's end is the matter at hand for everyone.

We are tourists here on earth. I need to know how to get home. All humans need to know how to get home. It's not that there are several ways to get there. That idea is a dodge and deception to avoid looking for the one way home.

The way is not hidden. Jesus is the way. He simply and clearly said, "No one comes to the Father except through me" ([John 14:6](#)). In the most often quoted verse of the Bible, Jesus said that whoever believes in him "will not perish but have everlasting life" ([John 3:16](#)).

That is a relevant answer for all humanity for all time. It addresses the "subject at hand" —the subject that touches everyone. It is the gospel message we confessional Lutherans announce to the world.

A new year begins. But before this year ends, 56 million people will die. They need to hear about Jesus. During the same time, 134 million babies will be born. Both figures tell us why we are here and remain a relevant part of this world.

One final note: The idea of relevance is a broad and complicated topic. The notes I jotted down for this column suggest that we will have to revisit this topic during the new year.

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