

Witnessing to the truth

How can I best answer my friends who say Christianity is arrogant and unloving to claim Jesus is the only Savior?

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Excellent question! It deserves more than a one-page answer, but we can identify main points that can be adapted to specific situations.

Don't deny truth

Truth is not negotiable. Jesus is the only way to God, the only source of salvation, the only mediator between God and mankind. The passages John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Acts 16:31; and 1 Timothy 2:5 merit review and reinforcement. Confronted by pluralistic objections to this throughout its history, Christianity survived—and thrived—not by downplaying or denying revealed truth but by confessing it. Our goal is to do the same—with love, courtesy, confidence, and a sense of privilege.

Define salvation

When Savior and salvation are discussed, how salvation is defined is of utmost importance. Analyze typical statements of those who deny Jesus is the world's only Savior.

Here are direct quotes from two prominent voices.

- President Barack Obama: "[My mother] was the kindest, most decent, generous person that I have ever known," but "not a believer." . . . "I'm sure she is in heaven."
- Pope Francis: "God forgives those who obey their conscience" and "The Christian God forgives those who do not believe and do not seek faith."

For these highly respected leaders and others, the essence of salvation is a reward for ethical performance that is judged satisfactory by human and cultural standards. It is behaving in ways that are judged politically, culturally, or religiously acceptable.

Missing in all this is a clear understanding of sin, how it affects every human, and the universal need for unmerited divine forgiveness supplied by someone who could earn it for others. That someone would be Jesus. This is what we can clarify courteously for our friends. We're not interested in denying or dishonoring moral behavior; we're defining salvation as a treasure that requires more than optimistic human effort. It's a gift from Jesus for sinners who deserve nothing and receive everything.

Define Jesus

"Jesus was a good man and a good teacher of morals. Like Muhammad, Buddha, and others. They all believed in love and goodness." Here's a basic assumption that

confronts us in many ways. And if that's true, it would be arrogant and unloving to suggest that all other religions are inadequate and Jesus is the only path to God and salvation. It's fitting, then, that we clarify the uniqueness of Jesus as God, who became human (the heart of Christmas), substantiated his identity through miracles and a message unparalleled in human history, provided the infinite payment for immeasurable sin, and verified his accomplishment by physically rising from death.

He's not like the others. It's not a new message, but it's one that is still needed and able to change hearts. Let this lion out of its cage.

Defend only

Describing Jesus as the "only" Savior triggers predictable accusations of intolerance, elitism, arrogance, and other moral failings. Yes, some Christians come across negatively. We can all work on winsome witnessing without tampering with the truth.

We cannot remove the offense of the cross (Galatians 5:11), but we can make the effort to speak with "gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15). To share our conviction that Jesus is the only Savior of the world of sinners remains an act of kindness that, rightly understood, leaves no room for arrogance or elitism. How best to do this? Start with these basics and adapt them to meet the specific need of each friend.

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