

10 Misconceptions of the Christian Faith

#6 Christianity Is a Bore

True joy is found only in Jesus Christ. The Christian faith makes a universal claim that humanity's quest for lasting happiness is found in no other source than Jesus. Christianity is not a parochial faith that brings satisfaction only to some people or cultures or eras, nor does it consist in joyless adherence to dogmas and strictures. Christianity is about experiencing the unfading delight of knowing the One for whom we were made. God is the answer for ultimate joy in this life and forever.

How we're made. The founders of our nation rightly perceived that the pursuit of happiness is fundamental to our existence. Blaise Pascal also captured the drive for delight that every person feels when he wrote, "All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves." The Bible was written, in part, to guide this innate pursuit of happiness. Discovering the source of happiness depends in large measure on knowing about human origins and human nature. From the biblical perspective humanity was made by God to worship and obey him: "From him, through him, and to him are all things" (Romans 11:33). Since we were made for this stated purpose, it follows that he designed us to be most satisfied when we fulfill the purpose for which we were created. Augustine put it this way: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in you."

Induced to delight. God not only created us for relationship with him, he also calls us to pursue joy in him. He commands in the Old Testament, "Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." (Psalm 37:4) and in the New Testament, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice" (Philippians 4:4). In addition to such mandates, he woos us to himself, promising that "in [his] presence there is fullness of joy; at [his] right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11). He even went so far as to demonstrate this truth in the example of the Savior, Jesus Christ. At the height of suffering in Christ's passion, he pursued joy in God, as one biblical author has stated, "for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising its shame" (Hebrews 12:2). Throughout Scripture God implores us to find joy and life in him. He is not a killjoy, wishing to stifle our pursuit of happiness. He is the fountain of living waters, bidding a thirsty and stubborn people to turn from their self-concocted pleasures and come to him as the source of true and everlasting joy.

Jesus Christ came for reconciliation. As a whole, humans have shirked their ultimate purpose of honoring God and instead followed their own desires. However, God chose not to exact justice upon his hostile creatures, but graciously set in motion a plan of reconciliation to mend humanity's estranged relationship with him. His merciful plan culminated in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who was God in the flesh. The benefits of Jesus' life and work are many, but his ultimate accomplishment was to restore the relationship between God and humankind, even though the former was the innocent and offended party. "Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:13). Jesus' perfect life, atoning death, and triumphant resurrection have confirmed that he is the only mediator between God and humans (1 Timothy 2:5).

Jesus Christ came for abundant life. When people are restored to a right relationship with our Creator, the result is true and lasting joy. This joy is not a coincidental byproduct of Jesus' mission, but

was the heart of it, for he declared, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

Humanity’s thirst for meaningful life and abiding joy is not a consequence of sin or an accident of evolution. God created us with a capacity for joy that is meant for relationship with an infinitely glorious being. He is the only one who can ultimately satisfy our innate hunger for happiness. Contrary to the misperceptions of so many people, Jesus did not come to stifle your pursuit of happiness; he came to grant you the joy that you seek in this life and in the next. To receive that joy, now and forever, we must simply let go of lesser, sinful joys – counterfeits of the true joy found only in a personal relationship with Jesus. He beckons with open arms, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink! Whoever believes in me...out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (John 7:37-38). Only in our infinitely glorious Creator will we find eternal, ever-increasing joy that will never disappoint.

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