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# "How To 2TiGer" Not To Abolish But Fulfill" Part 7

By: Milt Chamberlain

In the fullness of His ALL AUTHORITY, Jesus proclaimed **“I am the way, and the truth, and the life”** (*John 14:6a ESV*); a positive reality of great comfort to His followers. We don't have to search the world over for what is true or for the way to live now and forever. Jesus declares that He is all of these.

But then, He proclaims the companion negative reality, the other side of the same spiritual “coin,” **“No one comes to the Father except through me”** (*John 14:6b ESV*). Our society, at best, barely tolerates His positive declaration, but it goes absolutely ballistic over the second, calling it ‘intolerant, narrow-minded opinion’ and attempting to bully Jesus’ followers into ‘tolerant’ silence with a tired, meaningless mantra: “all opinions on spiritual matters are equally valid.”

But, this clichéd mantra is utterly illogical and devoid of meaning *unless* stated negatively, i.e., “all opinions on spiritual matters are equally *invalid*.” Why? Because many “spiritual opinions” are mutually exclusive, so they cannot *all* be equally valid. But, *all could be invalid*. So then, why is this concept never phrased correctly? Because to do so would reveal too much about the speaker and leave them open to charges of violating their own standards of political correctness.

“Inclusiveness at any cost” and “Personal Freedom without Responsibility” are two idols adoringly worshipped by our society. In pursuit of these, we have willfully abandoned all efforts to distinguish fact from opinion. Loud repetition alone will never transform opinions into facts. It may bully or compromise dissenters into not challenging the opinions—a political victory for loud repetition--but the opinions remain opinions, but are now assumed to be unassailable “facts”. In part, isn't this how societal blindness begins, grows, propagates, and intensifies?

Of all people, those calling themselves “Christian” must strive to be Realists even as our society races off towards its ‘fantasy land ideal’. We do this by individually and collectively taking Jesus’ every word very seriously. We cannot, with intellectual integrity, merely “believe” in Jesus while diluting His words to mere ‘religious’ platitudes and clichés as we compromise with society’s values and ‘social-speak.’ Jesus insists that to believe in Him is to follow Him, and to follow Him is to hear and do what He says. It’s really that simple...and that difficult.

The ‘many ways are OK’ view of spiritual matters assumes that no opinion has any basis for authority vis-a-vis any other opinion. It actually declares all such opinions to be equally *invalid*, but without ever honestly stating it so boldly. Rather, society hides its meaning in illogical cliché. This is something no one is supposed to notice and certainly never talk about openly.

Yet, is the assumption that all opinions on spiritual matters are equivalent really correct? Society rejects this view for all other areas. For example, sane people do not normally seek medical opinions from mechanics or car repair opinions from doctors because they recognize each has a basis of authority that renders their opinion on one subject superior to the other’s opinion on that same subject.

But, for spiritual matters alone society reverses itself and declares ‘equivalency of opinion.’ Why? Is it not simply to “keep the peace?” In the practice of medicine and car repair, opinions can be readily confirmed or denied by objective results. But, in “spiritual matters” by what “*purely objective*” result could one in this life confirm or deny each opinion? No such test exists here because the ultimate “test result” is “over there,” beyond this life, and inaccessible to us for study.

Consider then, that by definition, holding an opinion requires the opinion holder to have some degree of doubt, uncertainty, or lack of evidence that prevents irrefutable demonstration that their “opinion” is, in reality, a fact. That description certainly applies to all our opinions on spiritual matters! But it does not apply to Jesus for He never expressed an opinion. He spoke and acted in absolute certainty within His relationship with God the Father. Therefore, everything He said and did functioned to reveal reality, having absolutely nothing to do with ‘opinions.’

Now, someone may object, “Wait a minute! If that’s so, why haven’t God and Jesus demonstrated themselves as undeniably factual in some irrefutably obvious way such that we also don’t have to deal with opinions on spiritual matters?”

Great question! God, for His own reasons, created us different from animals in that He designed us with the ability and freedom to make moral choices. And Jesus declared that God’s will for our free moral choices is to **“...love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind”** and **“...love your neighbor as yourself.”** *Matt. 22:37, 39.*

God has designed us *and* His revelation of Himself to us so that we remain free to choose to love Him (or not) and our neighbors. Thus, if God revealed Himself to humanity in some “irrefutably obvious way,” would we really have a choice in responding to Him? For love to be love and not some inevitable, automatic, robotic reaction to stimuli, mustn’t we be free to choose *not* to love Him as well?

So, freedom to choose to love God must spring from faith, i.e., trusting allegiance (or not), in Jesus as the only way, and not from “irrefutably obvious evidence.” God requires us to respond to Him by faith in Jesus because apparently our freedom to love God (or not) couldn’t even exist as a possibility if we had “irrefutably obvious evidence” that Jesus is indeed God the Son.

It is my strong opinion that Jesus is King of kings, Lord of lords, and Only Savior; that He is worthy of the love I have for Him (and infinitely more beyond that pittance); and that He alone is our only hope, individually and collectively, to stop us from spinning down in a ‘mess of fantasies’ and to restore us to Reality. I can give evidence for my opinion, but I cannot demonstrate it to be irrefutable fact.

So, I am not trying to persuade you to my opinion. Instead, I am urging you to begin to read and take seriously every word of Him who has no opinions, who claimed to be God, and who is both the Ultimate Realist and Ultimate Reality.

Now, let’s return to the first part of Jesus’ declaration, **“I am the way, and the truth, and the life”** and look at each predicate nominative in reverse order:

· **“I am the life”** – Jesus refers to himself as the **“bread of life”** and **“the living bread”** in John 6:35, 48, 51. The imagery clearly intends to communicate that one must “feed” on Jesus – His person, actions, and words in order to have true life here and hereafter.

In John 11:17 He tells Martha, whose brother Lazarus has been dead four days, **“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live...”** Jesus tells her that death is not the end, for He is the resurrection. He is the life. And to prove these factual statements, He raises Lazarus from the dead.

Now, **“believes in me”** includes, but is not limited to accepting propositional statements about Jesus, e.g., that He is the incarnate Word of God who died for my sins, was resurrected on the third day, appeared to many witnesses, ascended to the right hand of the Father where He now reigns until He returns for His people to make all things new. **“Believe in me”** in New Testament Greek also means to *trust me, be loyal and faithful to me*, i.e., “to follow me and never quit on me.”

· **“I am the truth”** – Jesus not only proclaimed truth, He claimed to personify truth. What does that mean? Perhaps this is best understood by observing Jesus’ dialogue with Phillip on the night of Jesus’ arrest:

“Philip said to him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.’<sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, **“Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”?”**<sup>10</sup> **Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.**<sup>11</sup> **Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me...”** John 14:8-11.

Jesus consistently claimed unique relationship with the Father. In John 10:30 He concisely described that relationship as **“I and the Father are one.”** Jesus is the most we can know about God. Anything beyond Jesus’ revelation of God the Father is likely off-target opinion and speculation; unworthy of much attention.

· **“I am the way”** – Jesus describes Himself as the “entry portal” (narrow door, narrow gate; Luke 23:24 and Matthew 7:13-14 respectively) into God’s Kingdom. He declares that Kingdom life requires following Him as the “narrow way” that leads to life and avoiding the wide, easy way that leads to destruction.

What, in your *opinion*, characterizes the wide, easy way that leads to destruction? Do you think Jesus might declare these mantras, **“There are many ways to God”** and **“There are many ways to heaven”** as “wide and easy”?

In my *opinion* He absolutely does. After all, He went to the cross for us. And wasn’t the cross the narrowest, hardest, and most unnecessary “way” for Him to go *if* actually there are many other “ways” as our society and world declare in their great multiplicity of contradictory opinions?

How then do we 2TiGer (Think and Talk in Gentleness and Respect) about such nonsense? By knowing what Jesus said in all His teachings and by disciplining ourselves to share what *He said* in spiritual conversations with others. If we make our opinions the focus of conversation we give up the high ground and our discussions can easily degenerate into contests of “us vs. them,” “our opinions vs. their opinions.” While these might be interesting and stimulating discussions, they would likely have a competitive motive, a desire to win, and this is a polar opposite to sharing Christ in gentleness and respect.

So, as much as we can, we must make Jesus’ own words the focus of conversation. God is holy and we are not. We cannot cross the great divide that lies between. Only Jesus bridges that gap and so, **“No one comes to the Father except through me”** is fact stated by Jesus, not opinion. And so it is, with everything else He said.

Therefore, we must know what He said. We must take His every word seriously and never attempt to dilute their authority or explain them away. We must ask God for His wisdom to apply His words to the sharing opportunities He gives us. He promises that His words have power. Our opinions? Not so much.

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## Men of Shades Devotional

How about writing one devotion to share with the Men of Shades. Share your thoughts on a favorite Bible verse, a story from your life with an application from Scripture, or share a devotion written by a favorite writer that was particularly meaningful to you. Follow the parameters below and then send it to Steve Grissett at [s\\_grissett@yahoo.com](mailto:s_grissett@yahoo.com).

- Choose a favorite verse or verses (2 or 3).
- Write a short devotion of 200 to 300 words max.
- Add a title.
- Add one thought-provoking or reflective question at the end.
- Include a one or two sentence introduction of yourself.

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## Fall Wednesday Night

### Kickoff

Let’s kick off our Wednesday night activities this fall with a big celebration! Invite your friends and neighbors to join us on August 18<sup>th</sup> at 6pm around the Shades Pavilion and South Parking lot for food, games, activities, and fellowship as we re-launch our Wednesday night schedule. Stay tuned for more details.

[Learn More](#)

## Man Church

Our next Man Church is Sunday, August 29, and our guest speaker will be Dr. Robert Smith, Jr. Dr. Smith is the Charles T. Carter Chair of Divinity at Samford’s Beeson Divinity School. Dr. Smith pastored in Cincinnati for 20 years, and currently teaches preaching at Beeson. He has spoken at over 135 universities, colleges and seminaries across the globe. Mark your calendar and come hear a message of challenge and inspiration from Dr. Robert Smith, Jr. at Man Church on August 29 at 6:00pm.

[Learn More](#)

For more info on how to get involved with Men of Shades, visit [www.shades.org/men](http://www.shades.org/men)

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