

Dr. Anil Shetty:

In John (14:1-4) Jesus said“ Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me. In My father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, ‘I will come again’ and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.” What a marvelous assurance it is! You somehow get a sense of an assurance with authority in the person of Christ. Yet when you read in Matthew 24:36 when Jesus was asked about the time of his return to his father; Jesus said“ But the day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven but My father only.” Upon reading this passage one gets a sense of honesty, truthfulness in Jesus. Such is the Lord I came to know in the year 1998. Being a transplant from a Hindu tradition, I have come to accept Jesus as the true savior and redeemer of our sins. Today, as a result, I have grown in my faith in Christ Jesus and have come to terms with realities of life by accepting the blessed assurances and saving knowledge of Christ Jesus.

It is indeed an honor to share my testimony and to be a witness to the wonderful works of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in my life. I share this with a hope that an unsaved soul may benefit from this testimony and will come closer to discovering the truth. It is indeed a privilege to know the truth about God, His mercy and intervention in our lives.

Being born in a Hindu family I was constantly exposed to our cultural traditions, which were handed down from one generation to the next. All these years I had been following blindly, without any reasoning mind, my faith in idol worship. I was raised to believe in worshipping in temple to different idols. Eight years into my stay in this country, I got married. We are blessed with three beautiful boys. I figured that being a good person, God rewards with good things in life. I strongly believed in the law of “Karma”. I continued to go to Temple and force my children to pray. I continued this practice until I was faced with a difficult point in my life. It was in 1995 when my wife constantly complained of severe headaches. Upon several visits and tests from neurologists we had a very frightening result. Renu was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. We were not prepared for this when everything was going just right for us. It is ironical that I am involved in a clinical research trial of drugs and study of the same disease in my hospital. As a human, initially you begin to deny this happening to you. We went through this phase. I believed that I was sincere, religious and honest in my life and this should not have happened to us. You begin to search for answers as to why this is happening to us. What did we do wrong? It was a helpless and depressed period in my life. It was at this time a Muslim clergyman who had converted to Christianity was in town preaching. A thoughtful and concerned Christian friend of ours made an arrangement for him to visit us and pray for us. Being a strong devotee of Hindu Gods, I reluctantly agreed to host him. It was in our conversation that the pastor really opened my eyes. I experienced a strange feeling in my body when he left after praying for us. Subsequently, I had another opportunity to meet with the same pastor along with a believer friend of his, who prayed fervently for me. This was the beginning of my new life. Initial curiosity led me to read the scriptures to make sense out it. At that time I was introduced to a local pastor whose persistent prayer for my family and me helped me through rough times. It was through his spiritual support that I began going to his church, Maranatha Evangelistic Ministry. At church I met other good Christians with whom I prayed and worshipped together. It is in that church I learned how to pray and worship and intercess for others. Suddenly, I found my prayer life had changed. I began finding answers to my prayers. You see, as a Hindu I was given to understand that each deity embodies certain power of nature in that if you miss worshipping any one, your blessings would be withheld. I used to worship God out of fear and not out of reverence. What I learned being a

Christian is to pray and worship with reverence and with love. What I learned from praying and believing Christ Jesus is amazing in its truth and simplicity.

We Hindus believe our ultimate goal is to be one with the 'impersonal divine' at which point we will have achieved the 'Moksha'. If God exists then there exist certain objective moral values, which transcend from His being. Otherwise, we will not have any objective standards to measure up to or have no reference point for measuring our standards (1). In that case, you will agree, there is an objective absolute truth. This truth, by definition, is exclusive, as there is nothing like a partial truth. I have learned to believe that if any religion is to be true in its presentation and perception of God, then it should not only be true under any measure but also should reflect the reality. I believe there can only be one absolute truth and therefore, all religions can be wrong but they cannot be right at the same time (2). From the ancient Vedas and Puranas it is clear that Sages searched for truth with great sincerity and humility by confessing their inability to attain the perfect truth. Such a cry for atonement existed and has been documented in Vedas and Puranas (3). You will recall the famous saying that goes like this...

Asato mā Sat gamaya,  
Tamaso mā Jyotirgamaya,  
Mrtyormā Amritam gamaya..

Meaning ..

(From the unreal lead me to the real  
from darkness lead me to light  
from death lead me to immortality)

How do you ascertain what is the ultimate truth or how do you ascertain which religion is the right one? This realization comes from knowledge and understanding. Unfortunately, even the Sage Shankara in his great wisdom and understanding of Vedas did not make it clear! According to Hindu philosophy, Vedas and Puranas are ultimate revelations of God to mankind. Being a Brahmin, great Shankara proclaimed that only Brahmin could have access to Vedas. According to him, to receive 'Moksha' or 'Salvation' one has to be born a Brahmin (2). You will recall that Buddhism took-off out of rejection from Hinduism. Buddha was a non-Brahmin and proclaimed that to know Veda one does not have to be born a Brahmin.

Hinduism is like a cosmic vacuum, accepting and tolerating all practices. The famous saying goes, "all roads lead to Rome" meaning we can practice any which way we want and all our worship ultimately reach the same impersonal divine. In a message Dr. Ravi Zechariahs, a noted Christian apologist, once said, there is a basic fallacy here, which Dr. Radhakrishnan (past President and philosopher) said it, the best; "Hinduism has opened its arms so wide that when it closes in, it strangles itself". As Ravi points out correctly, if Hindus are so tolerant of other religions, why do they get upset when someone changes to another religion? You see that when it comes to talking about any religion, Hinduism in particular, Hindus have certain prejudices. With prejudice comes an unfair perception! Unless, we are open to an intellectual debate or discussion, we as Hindus will always be emotionally attached and blinded to our cultural traditions. I believe strongly, our loyalty to religion should be based on our sincere desire to seek the truth.

My view in all this is that let each one of us search for the truth. The knowledge of that truth will ultimately liberate you from a spiritual quagmire. Our lives should reflect that truth in our daily living. We seem to be caught up in a race to acquire material wealth in this secular world. We believe having material wealth is the answer to all our physical and spiritual needs. Its pleasures

are only temporary. What we need is a pleasure that is eternal. This is possible only when we are righteous, I mean, to be right with God. How do we lead a life that is right with God and that which reflects God's will? Knowing God's commandments (scriptures), pursuing His commandments diligently and praying fervently, we will no doubt be leading a path that is right with God. Righteousness is internal before it is external. Therefore, we as individuals need to first establish that internal (personal) relationship with the divine (2). Man's chief aim should be to Glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Only then the freedom (Moksha), also called perfection, enlightenment, or immortality can be realized.

When you begin your quest to determine the truth, you will no doubt find that in Christ Jesus. He is the true blameless Lamb of God who knowingly sacrificed his life in order to save us from eternal death from sinful life. Lord Krishna in his revelation to Arjuna said on the battleground, "Whenever there is sin and evil or evildoers in this earth, I will come to destroy them". By definition, we are all sinners, which means we are condemned and doomed. However, Jesus came to this world not to condemn but to save us. If only, we realize this there is no doubt the salvation is waiting for us. I have been blessed through the saving knowledge of Christ Jesus. Today, I am at peace with myself knowing that God's grace is sufficient for me to face any challenge in my life. I know and believe deep in my heart that saying "God's will not take me where his Grace cannot sustain me". Prayer and reading the Bible has been practice in our lives. It is through a prayer I am able to place my needs before the Lord and it is through reading the Bible I find his response. There are many things I wanted in life but God has been gracious enough to provide what I most needed.

I have been richly blessed with Christian friends who could not have come in a better time. I strongly, believe my adversity was God's opportunity to show me His power and make me a better person. I am blessed to know about Ravi Zechariah's ministry whose books and talks have greatly influenced my life. If any Hindu wants an answer from an ethical or philosophical or moral point, I strongly recommend listening to Ravi's message through books and through radio. I have also benefited richly from reading biographies of Rabbi Maharaja (Death of a Guru) and Sadhu Sunder Singh.

References:

1. From Dr. William Lane Craig, "God, are you there?"
2. From Dr. Ravi Zechariahs, "Is there Meaning in Evil and Suffering?"
3. From Dr. Joseph Padinjarekara, "Christ in ancient Vedas"

May God bless you with the wisdom and the knowledge to pursue the truth.

Dr. Anil Shetty