



Q. Won't God accept non-Christians as long as they are good, religious people who are sincere about their beliefs?

Josh McDowell Ministry

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A. The Bible says there is a way that seems right to man, but the end of this is the way of death (Proverbs 16:25). In other words, a person can be sincere in his or her beliefs and still be wrong.

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You may recall hearing or reading the news story about a professional basketball player who jokingly pointed a gun at a friend and, believing the gun wasn't loaded, pulled the trigger. The gun went off and the friend was killed.

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The basketball player who pulled the trigger claimed that he sincerely believed the gun was not loaded and that he did not intend to harm his friend. Yet this man killed his friend because he had believed something that wasn't true. Sincerity is not enough if the object of belief is not true, and all the sincerity in the world will not bring that friend back to life.

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The apostle Paul teaches that simply practicing religion does not excuse anyone, but rather it may compound the person's guilt. In examining the pagan's religion, Paul points out that it is a distortion of truth. He says, "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie" (Romans 1:25, NASB).

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The glory of God is substituted and replaced by the glory of the creature. Their religion is one of idolatry, and to worship idols is an insult to the dignity of God. This is something God has always detested.

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"You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God" (Exodus 20:3-5, NASB). Thus a religious person has no advantage if he is worshipping the wrong god, no matter how sincere.

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God sets the standard, and He will accept only those who come to Him through Jesus Christ. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12, KJV).

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Excerpts taken from *Answers to Tough Questions Skeptics Ask About the Christian Faith*. Josh McDowell and Don Stewart. Living Books, 1980.

Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise indicated.

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