



Not That Kind of Christian

When I tell new friends or acquaintances that I am a Christian, a frequent response goes something like this: "Well, exactly *what kind* of Christian are you?" My answer includes specific distinctions about common assumptions. Here are a few:

- I am a Christ-follower. I do not follow or believe or trust in religion. I follow, believe and trust in Jesus. I believe God loves us in spite of religion, not because of any efforts or deeds we perform to convince him to love us.

- I do not believe that God is a God of wrath. I do not believe that God the Father was so upset with the sin of humanity that he could only be appeased through divine punishment and violence carried out on God the Son on his cross. I do not believe the cross of Christ is all about penal substitution inflicted on God the Son by God the Father.

- As a Christ-follower I believe the popular idea of hell as a place of eternal torture is a detestable religious fabrication. Hell, as popularly understood and proclaimed by religion at large, is completely inconsistent with the nature of God revealed in the Bible. I am not *that kind of Christian* because I believe God loves the entire world. I do not believe God sends people to hell because he loves them!

- I believe that God really does love the whole world. I do not believe in a God who shuts people out of his kingdom because they didn't belong to the right church or even if they didn't use the word "Christian" to define themselves. Jesus works with whomever he wants to work. In the book of

Revelation we read that he is standing outside of a church that will not let him in—he is knocking on the door, but the image is that members inside think Jesus is already on "their team."

- I do not believe that God asks me to make judgments and decisions about everyone ("true" Christians) who loves and accepts him and conversely everyone who, in my opinion, despises and rejects God's love and grace. Making such assessments is none of my business and is way above my pay grade.

- I am *the kind of Christian* who does not feel any need to "witness" and give a personal "testimony" to every person I meet for the first time or to those who already know me. I do not feel people whom I fail to "convert" or "save" or "lead to Jesus" will burn in hell for all eternity. I believe God does and will fully reveal his love and grace to all.

- I believe the Bible is an inspired compilation of 66 books—useful for teaching, edification and encouragement—but I do not believe that the Bible is the infallible and inerrant Word of God. The Bible itself tells me that Jesus is the infallible and inerrant Word of God.

- I do not absolutely believe that God created the entire universe in six literal 24-hour periods of time 6,000 years ago. What difference does it make? Some want to "prove" the earth is "young" because they think the Bible says so. When science irrefutably proves the earth to be much older than 6,000 years, some die-hard "young-earthers" say God created the earth to "seem" old! As a Christ-follower I see no reason to believe that

science inevitably produces atheists and agnostics—science and faith are compatible.

- I do not believe that women are inferior to men and that religion has any business "keeping them in submission and silence." Nor do I believe women should be required to cover their bodies in such a way to protect men from having to overcome "natural passions that might be unleashed" if too much of a woman's body is showing.

- I believe eternal life with God, after the experience of death following human life, is a more likely eternal outcome for many, if not most. I believe in *hopeful inclusiveness*.

- I am hopeful that more will be a part of God's kingdom of heaven than less, and I am thankful that God has not given any individual human or any group of humans, including church authorities, the right to reserve space in a fictional, fabricated hell for those people who do not meet their standards.

- However, I am not a "universalist" in the sense of believing all humans will live forever with God, regardless of the choices they make on earth. I believe God allows humans to reject his love and embrace, and that some have, some do and some may.

You may agree or disagree with my thoughts...so what about you? Give some thought to the kind of Christ-follower you are, by the grace of God. □

—Greg Albrecht

Join us for Not "That Kind" of Christian at the audio teaching ministry of Christianity Without the Religion, the week of May 19, 2019.