

[Youth: Debating the Merits of Our Two Religions](#)

Category : [October/November/December 2010](#)

Published by dharmalingam on Aug. 29, 2010

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Debating the Merits of Our Two Religions

A personal text exchange between a devout Christian and an ardent Hindu

In the fall of 2009, friends Pooja Patel (pooja.patel.mp_@_gmail.com) and Mckenna Smith, both 13 and in 8th grade at Abell Junior High School in Midland, Texas, discussed one evening by text messaging the merits of their respective religions, Hinduism and Christianity.

Pooja: Hey, I had a question: you know how we were talking about the whole religion thing earlier today and about people who don't believe in Christ going to hell?

Mckenna: Yes.

Pooja: That applies to everyone, right? No exceptions. Like even if you're a really good person, but you haven't accepted Christ?

Mckenna: Yes. Everyone. It doesn't matter how "good" of a person we are. No one deserves salvation, but that is why grace is so awesome. Grace is literally defined as an undeserved gift. We don't deserve God, but He loves us and wants us, regardless.

Pooja: So, do you think Gandhi burned in hell?

Mckenna: I don't know enough about Gandhi to say.

Pooja: Well, isn't his not accepting Christ as his savior enough to know that he couldn't have gone to heaven?

Mckenna: Yes.

Pooja: So even though he brought India to independence, inspired movements for civil rights and freedom across the world, led nationwide campaigns to ease poverty, expand women's rights, build religious and ethnic amity, end untouchability, and increase economic self reliance, he still burned in hell--but someone who has a child out of wedlock can still make it to heaven just by accepting Christ?

Mckenna: Yes. It could have been that easy for him, too. It's so easy, and it's painless and instantaneous.

Pooja: So today if I go out and rob a bank, but in a few weeks feel bad, and repent, and accept Jesus as my savior, I'll go to heaven, but my mother, who is a staunch Hindu, won't?

Mckenna: Yes. It doesn't make those things acceptable, but don't you think everyone deserves forgiveness? A second chance? Unconditional love?

Pooja: Then why can't God forgive me for not accepting Christ as my savior? Why must I still burn in hell when I have not committed any atrocities, simply because I have not accepted Christ? If I truly am a good person, and if God truly is loving, then if He loves me, how can He send me to burn?

Mckenna: Because you aren't showing love for Him. You haven't accepted the

grace. You haven't proclaimed His worth and beauty. You haven't admitted to sins. You don't believe in Him and His Son's priceless death.

Pooja: When you say I'm not showing love for him, do you mean that I don't love God? I do love God, and believe in Him, and accept and acknowledge that He is all-pervasive, omniscient and omnipresent. When you say I haven't proclaimed my sins, are you saying that I don't accept that I've done wrong in my life? When you say I don't believe in Him, do you mean I don't believe in God?

Mckenna: No, you don't believe in Christ, the death, burial and resurrection. You don't believe that His grace exists. A person can claim to love God, Christ, Jesus, etc., but never truly accept in their heart that He is the only way, that He is king over all, the only escape, a friend, the creator, the righteous one, the sacrificial lamb and all that jazz. You believe that it's up to you and your power to get to heaven. But we are NOTHING compared to God. Only God can decide on "karma." He is too loving to make us pay the price. He already paid it. He sent His perfect Son to die as a perfect image of love and grace. But you don't believe this. You think it's your job to make up for sins. You are nothing without Him. But you still go on with your belief.

Pooja: We don't doubt the existence of all that you believe in. But we believe that following and accepting Jesus is your way to realizing God, not ours. What we do not accept is the thought that your path is the only way. Our scriptures always state, "Paths are many, yet Truth is One." There are different paths or religions which help you realize the One Absolute Truth that is God. We do not believe that just because you call God by a different name and use different forms of worship, prayer or meditation, you will burn in some lower realm. We do not believe it is wrong to believe in a different way of realizing God. You say, God is too loving to make us pay the price. When you say "us," do you refer to Christians or us as humankind? If God is loving towards all humankind, how can He leave the one billion Hindus on Earth to burn in hell when many of them have done little or nothing to deserve such a seemingly disastrous end? We, too, love God, and we, too, believe that He is forgiving and loving; but without reaping the fruits of the actions which we have sowed, going to heaven would be utterly pointless. We would not have truly realized the mistakes in life we have made.

Mckenna: I am not trying to disrespect your religion. But the Bible states, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." I think

you are just over-analyzing the love of God. Jesus paid all the prices. He went through everyone's "karma" in one moment. It all goes back to grace. It doesn't matter what you do. You will never truly deserve salvation. But the gracious love of Christ is that we don't have to deserve it. He gave it to us, free of charge, no strings attached. It's simple and awesome and easy. And it sets you free of all sin and grief and shame. It's a liberation from the rocks that life places on our shoulders. It's love, an unconditional love that no one could ever fully comprehend.

Pooja: Ha ha. Well, we've come to the point where I can no longer fully comprehend what you're trying to put across, and I think that's a mutual feeling. So anyway, good night.