

# A Dummy's Guide to Religion

According to the principle of Ockham's Razor, the simplest explanation for an occurrence is usually the correct one. The more assumptions that are required to make your case in a controversy, the weaker your case would be.

In my view, this rule also applies to religious controversy. Most religions teach that God is loving, omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent.

Most brilliant theologians agree with the above logical assumptions about God. At the same time they vehemently disagree over hundreds of other religious doctrines. How would it be possible, then, for uneducated and relatively simple-minded people like you and I to successfully sift through all those competing religious views and decide which specific religion to adopt?

The answer to this dilemma is very simple. Just follow your gut. Through a process of simple elimination, discard all religious doctrines which contradict with what you already intuitively know to be true about God.

All religious systems of thought are at least partially true. None of them are completely true. Within each religious community there are many competing "secondary" doctrines, some of which are in obvious contradiction with the four basic characteristics of God which were outlined above.

Let's begin by taking fear out of the equation. If you are afraid of what God might do to you if you question some of the tenets of your current religion, there must be something wrong with your view of God. If God loves you more than any human being possibly could, why would He punish or reject you for simply wanting to know the truth?

Now let's take guilt out of the equation. Let's face it, we are all a bunch of sinners. We only differ in the types of sin we are guilty of. God loves us anyway, just as any human father loves his children, even when they stray. So, no matter what we think God might do to us because of our sin, He does it out of love. God is more loving than any human father. When a loving father punishes His children, He is motivated by love, and the purpose of the punishment is correction, not retribution. No matter what sins you commit, or how far you stray in your theological thinking, God never ceases to be your loving heavenly Father.

Now let's stop worrying about how dumb you are when it comes to your understanding of the religious texts. When you read the text, many passages will be difficult to understand and will be subject to a variety of interpretations. Follow your gut and accept the interpretations which most closely align with what you know to be the true nature of God.

Now, stop trying to be such a perfectionist. Let's face it. No one is perfect, and all religious texts were written by imperfect people. Inspired? Yes. But perfect? No. God is able to use you despite your imperfections, and He is able to use the writers of the religious texts despite their imperfections. Religious texts are full of God's truth. They also contain some misinformation.

How do you accurately discern what is true and what is not? Simple, believe those teachings which are consistent with what you know to be the true character of God.

Finally, realize that God does not want you to know all the answers. He is all-powerful. If God wanted you to know all the answers, then that is exactly what would happen. If you do not have all the answers, then you can be sure that God is OK with that. There is something about not knowing all the answers that makes life fun and adventurous. If we were given the answers all at once, where would be the joy of discovery?

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