

Where does God draw the line?

If you believe that after death there are only two alternatives, everlasting bliss in heaven or everlasting punishment in Hell, how does God draw the dividing line between these two groups? Let's suppose you were able to line up all the people who have ever lived and rank them in order, based on whatever measuring stick you believe God uses in deciding who goes where. On one end of the lineup would be those who absolutely would qualify for Heaven, and at the other end would be those who would absolutely not qualify. It doesn't matter what criteria you would use for ranking these individuals. Most Christians would use the criteria of faith in Christ as one's personal Savior. Others might use the criteria of repentance from sin and following Jesus as Lord. Others might insist that both criteria be met.

Here's the problem, very few people would qualify 100%. If the measuring stick is faith, how many doubts are permissible? How strong does one's faith need to be? If the measuring stick is repentance and making Jesus Lord of one's life, how strong does that repentance need to be? Does one need to repent of every single known sin and completely change the direction of one's life in every respect and achieve perfection? For most of us, repentance would never be absolute, but something that we grow into as the Holy Spirit works in our lives.

So, understanding that we all believe and repent in varying degrees, let's line up everyone who ever lived in order of the strength of their faith and/or repentance from sin. At one end of the line would be those who satisfy the criteria 100% and the other end of the line would be those who have absolutely no faith and have never repented of even a single sin. Assuming there would be about 70 billion people in that lineup (all who have ever lived), where do you think God might draw that dividing line between those who go to Heaven and those who go the other direction?

How much difference might there be between the two individuals standing closest to that dividing line, one on the Heaven-bound side and the other on the Hell-bound side? For all practical purposes, there would be absolutely no difference between those two individuals with respect to their "qualification" for Heaven. Yet, one would be spending all eternity in Heavenly bliss and the other poor slob would be tortured for all eternity in the flames of Hell.

Does it make any sense at all to you that a just and loving God would divide all humanity in this way and into only two groups?

The truth is that Jesus did not come into the world to condemn it, but instead He came to save it, all of it, not just some of it. God chastises those whom He loves, in direct proportion to what is needed to eventually bring them to full repentance. This is not an instantaneous process. It is an ages-long process for each of us. Eventually all of us make it into the Kingdom, fully perfected.