

"I am truly honored and happy to have become a member of the El Estero Church family. But you might not know much about me yet. So, occasionally, and regularly, I would like to share my trivial daily life, ordinary or interesting events that happen to me or my family, and my thoughts and opinions through this column section. I hope that through reading my writings, all of you will come to know me better. Thank you and love you!"

'Pastor Joe Is Such A Person!' Column No.1

"Is Christianity a narrow-minded religion?"

This question came to my mind when I heard about the story that a non-believer was upset by my friend-pastor's sermon mentioning other religions. My friend told me that while he was sorry to have caused upset, he was also confused as he hadn't disparaged other religions but merely discussed differences.

Nowadays, people often react excessively and accuse Christianity of being narrow-minded when other religions are mentioned. They believe all religions are fundamentally similar, pursuing goodness (although some extreme views label all religions as inherently evil), and think Christians alone are intolerant and fail to accept other religions.

But this is a big misunderstanding. Religions are not the same. Depending on one's religion, worldviews, thoughts, and actions can differ drastically. For instance, certain religions still practice child sacrifice, and some have caused mass suicides with the belief in an imminent apocalypse. This isn't exclusive to cults; the major world religions also have their differences. For example, Islam has been associated with constant war and terror due to its beliefs, and Hinduism's caste system, based on its doctrines, has relegated the lowest caste, the Sudras, to a subhuman status.

Those who claim all religions are the same often don't understand the differences. Another common claim is that all religions are merely different paths to the same God. Again, this is a misconception. For instance, Buddhism does not believe in a personal god, while Hinduism focuses more on the material world than the spiritual. Claiming all religions are the same often reflects a form of arrogance, placing oneself above these religions and saying, 'To me, you all are the same.'

Another reason Christianity is accused of being narrow-minded is that it allegedly does not accept people with opposing views. Embedded in this thought is the belief that goodness includes accepting everyone. However, every organization has its purpose and beliefs, and it naturally excludes those who contradict them. For example, if a member of a gay rights group suddenly starts preaching that homosexuality is sinful, it's natural for the group to expel them. No organization accepts everyone.

Of course, if an organization hates or attacks others for having different opinions, it rightly deserves criticism for being exclusive. However, Christianity, unlike many other religions and organizations, teaches to love, serve, and fulfill the needs of those who think differently. Despite historical and present deviations from this teaching, Christianity is arguably one of the most inclusive religions in this regard.