

TOPIC 4**ALL RELIGIONS ARE
BASICALLY THE SAME. FACT OR
FICTION?****Conversation Points**

- ★ People who can conversationally speak more than one language are smarter than most people. **AGREE or DISAGREE?**
- ★ People who have pets are always more caring than those people who do not. **AGREE or DISAGREE?**
- ★ Vegetarians are healthier than people who eat vegetables and meat. **AGREE or DISAGREE?**

Reflection

Lee Strobel was born in Arlington Heights, Illinois. He grew up with a keen interest in news. When he was 13-years old he started in his own newspaper, *The Arlington Bulletin* - reporting news about bikes, local government, and crime. This was delivered to seventy-three customers in his estate. When he was 14-years old he first met Leslie who became his closest friend. But through Lee's teen years he became extremely angry and rebellious which was not made any easier by his growing use of alcohol. Despite the best efforts of his father to prevent his son spiralling out of control, they only ended up in very heated yelling matches. On the eve of his graduation from high school (when Lee would soon be about to leave home for college), his relationship with his father, Walter Strobel, had become so bad and deteriorated so much that his exasperated dad said to him, "*I don't have enough love for you to fill my little finger!*"

After high school, Lee was glad to leave home and move to neighbouring Missouri for college where he earned a degree in journalism from Missouri University. He then went on to the prestigious Yale University in Connecticut where he earned a Masters of Studies in Law. He and his wife Leslie were both 21-years old when they married in 1972. They soon moved back to Illinois where Lee took up a position with *The Chicago Tribune* as a law reporter and eventually became the Tribune's Legal Editor. He gained

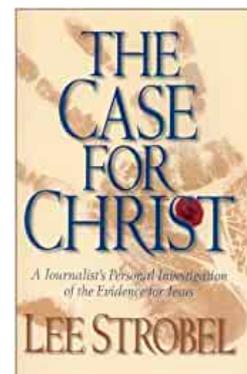


Leslie and Lee on their wedding day in 1972

a reputation as a hard-hitting investigative journalist and won many awards in the process. But through this period he also became a hard-drinking and very unpleasant angry man. Leslie was becoming increasingly fearful especially for their newly arrived baby daughter, Alison. Lee said, *"I lived a very immoral, and drunken, and profane, and narcissistic, really self-destructive kind of a life. That was my life."* Years later, Alison reflected on her childhood and said that as a little girl she was fearful of her dad. In an interview about this time of his life, Lee told the interviewer that *the ugliest detail about him was that he came home drunk and angry so often that his daughter would immediately gather her toys and go to her room when he walked in the door after work.*

Lee and Leslie's marriage was at this stage "teetering on divorce". Linda, a neighbour in their apartment building had become increasingly concerned for Leslie after hearing the yelling and the commotion especially when he began throwing things and putting his foot through the wall! Linda reached out to Leslie. Befriending Leslie, one day she invited her to come which her church in Chicago, which was, at that stage, meeting in a movie cinema. Leslie enjoyed it so much that she kept going week after week. Lee became concerned. "I didn't want to be married to a Christian," he said. "I didn't sign up for this." So he decided he *would* go with his wife to her church so that he could show her why they were wrong!

What happened instead was not what Lee was expecting. He heard an intelligent presentation about the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and Christianity. This meant that his task of showing Leslie *why it was wrong* was going to be more difficult than he first thought. He used his skills as an investigative journalist over the next 18 months to do his research which involved interviewing leading theologians across America. Initially, he presented his work to *The Chicago Tribune* to publish as a series of investigative articles. They declined. So it was published in a book, *The Case for Christ* which also contains how the evidence persuaded Lee to become a Christian!



I came to the conclusion ultimately that based on the avalanche of evidence that points so powerfully toward the truth of Christianity, it would have taken more faith for me to maintain my atheism than to become a Christian.

LEE STROBEL

The Case For Christ, 1998

Investigating the Truth Claims of Religions

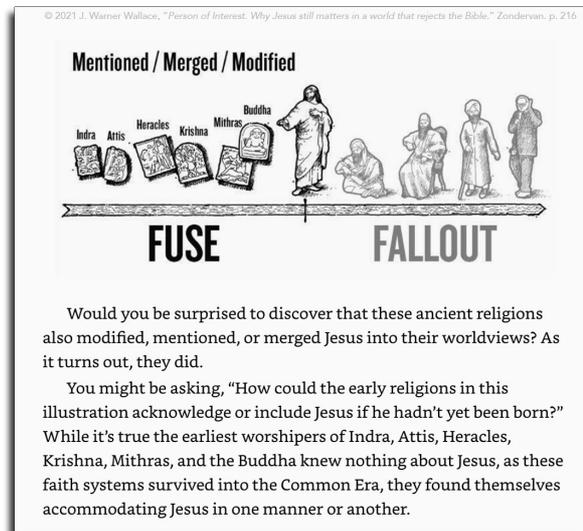
The Case For Christ was the first of forty books about God, Jesus, and Christianity, that Lee Strobel investigated and wrote journalistically about. Based on his research, he found that the idea that all religions were basically the same was simply not true. Christians believe that there is one God who is a triune person of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Islam teaches that this is the unforgivable sin of *shirk*. Although there are now many different types of Buddhists, classical Buddhism teaches that there is *no God*. Hinduism teaches that *Brahma* created everything from himself so that he is now dissolved into the universe including into a multiplicity of many gods particularly Shiva, Ganesha, Krishna, Vishnu, and in some forms of Hinduism, another 330,000,000 gods. As you can see, these different religions each have completely different understandings of *what* and *who* God is. This necessarily means that they each have radically different views on the meaning and purpose of life, life-after-death, sexuality, and science. .

People who have different religious beliefs are often very nice, warm, easy-to-get-along-with, people. You might have good intellectual reasons for thinking their religion is wrong. **How does meeting a nice member of that religion challenge your views?**

From the Bible

1. How does the way that Jesus spoke to the religious leaders of Judaism in John 5:33-40 effect the idea that all *religions are equal* and *basically the same*?
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J. Warner Wallace points out in his book, *Person of Interest*, that after Jesus came, all existing religions in some way have tried to incorporate some of His teachings into their own religion, and/or claim that Jesus basically endorsed them.



2. Note what Jesus the Christ said as recorded in John 14:6 and discuss whether Jesus thought that "all religions lead to God"?

3. Some teach that since Jesus the Christ is the Saviour of all people, all people (regardless of their religion or no religion) have already been eternally saved and made right with God. In what way does Romans 10:9-10 challenge this idea?

4. Read Acts 4:12. Is it *unfair* of God to reject all other religions other than trusting and following Jesus the Christ as Saviour and Lord? Discuss.

Additional References

Pew Research, *Religion in India: Tolerance and Segregation*. June 29 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/06/29/beliefs-about-god-in-india/>

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