

**Objections to Christianity**

Group 5

5/22/2013 5:00 PM

Phoenix AZ

**(0:00:00.0-0:02:47.3) INTRODUCTIONS . . . TELL ME YOUR NAME AND ABOUT YOUR HOUSEHOLD.**

**Herbena:** I work at Casino Arizona (0:02:52.9 unclear) Resort. I have a live-in spouse, boyfriend, and a small dog. Excuse me, sorry. I used to attend church with my parent because I felt like I was forced, and ever since I moved out I haven't attended church, and that was about, at least eight years ago, ten years ago.

**(0:03:18.7) WHAT KIND OF DOG?**

**Herbena:** A Yorkie poo.

**Jenny:** I have a husband and a seventeen-month-old daughter, a dog, and a cat, and I'm an accountant. I guess I'm atheist. I was raised to believe whatever I wanted to believe.

**Lauren:** I have a boyfriend and I live with him and I do production design on film sets, movies. I work here and then I travel to New Mexico or I travel to LA and I'm all over the place. I play bass in a band locally here. I grew up, I was baptized Catholic and then baptized Russian Orthodox and then went to Catholic Church, went to the Russian Orthodox Church that's, I think, somewhere in downtown Phoenix. And also on my grandmother's side, their family is Jewish, so I also went to the Jewish temple. I went to church with friends growing up. I've basically had an interest in religion and I studied it a lot more or less, but I never felt the need to cling myself to one. I have my beliefs and I don't really believe that an institution can quite tell you how you're supposed to be. It's something that you have to figure out yourself.

**(0:04:58.4) WE'LL GET INTO THAT.**

**Lauren:** That's where I stand.

**(0:05:04.3) I'M GLAD YOU'RE HERE.**

**Lauren:** Yes, ma'am.

**Melissa:** I'm a mom of three. I have a seventeen, fifteen, and twelve-year-old. I am married to my partner. Been married for a little over fifteen years to my wife. I am executive recruiter. I'm probably an extreme individual. I wouldn't choose life any other way. Born into a Jehovah Witness family with a Baptist father. A good mix. I choose not to go to church today. Swear to God.

**Desiree:** I work for the state of Arizona for almost fifteen years now. I have a sixteen-year-old daughter and a boyfriend, dog, cat at home.

**(0:05:57.2) BOYFRIEND, DOG, CAT ALL THE SAME THING?**

**Desiree:** No. *(0:06:00.2 Unclear/crosstalk/laughter).*

**(0:06:05.3) WHAT DO YOU DO FOR THE STATE?**

**Desiree:** I work for Family Assistance in the state welfare system.

**(0:06:10.6) YOU HAVE A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ON THIS.**

**Desiree:** Yes. I really didn't grow up religious at all. My grandparents were Catholic and recently went to Jehovah Witness.

**Jessica:** I'm married to my husband of nineteen years. We've got two kids; one's fourteen and the other one's eight. I am a small business assistant, self-employed, work from home. I was baptized Catholic, but I'm non-practicing. I don't really follow any one religion, but I have a great interest because of a rare blood type that I have, so I do a lot of research.

**Leah:** I'm living with my brother, mom, and grandma. We now have five cats and a dog. I'm unschooled—I've been for the past long time—so self-taught everything and attend part-time community college. I'm pretty much agnostic, except for I've been to the temple. My grandma's spiritual, sort of, but the rest of my family's agnostic. I don't know what it's called, it's a temple. It's almost Eastern religion. It's somewhere. I don't know what it's called.

**Julie:** I grew up here. I was born Protestant, never been to a public school a day in my life, including university. I'm more spiritual now than religious, for sure. I'm an IT analyst and I have a girlfriend. Not live-in girlfriend. That's about it.

**(0:08:27.9) DO YOU HAVE ANY ANIMALS?**

**Julie:** No, no animals. I work with animals all day. *(Laughter.)*

**(0:08:38.5) DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE WAIVER YOU SIGNED?**

*(No response indicated.)*

**(0:09:07.3) WHAT DO YOU THINK WHEN YOU HEAR TERMS LIKE "CHRISTIANITY," "THE CHURCH," AND "JESUS"?**

**Female respondent:** Conformity. It's the first word that you have with me.

**Female respondent:** Ignorance. Brainwashing.

**Female respondent:** Blind acceptance.

**Leah:** I agree with all those. I usually feel defensive.

**Female respondent:** Standoffish.

**(0:10:08.4) YOU OR THEM?**

**Female respondent:** Me, as far as they go.

**Female respondent:** I think of community, because the way that I see it is it's people desperately wanting to belong to something and have a sense of community. I don't necessarily feel offended by them. I've run into all types of Christians, and it really depends on the Christian or the person that you meet. Some of them are extremely nice and are respectful and respect your views and then others are just bats\*\*\* crazy. *(Laughter.)* I'm sorry, it's true. Others are ridiculous. To me it's all about the type of person they are. More or less I see it as almost like people belonging to a club.

**(0:10:55.6) WHAT DOES THE TERM "CHRISTIANITY" CONJURE UP IN YOUR MIND?**

**Female respondent:** People want to save me. It's scary. I don't need saving.

**(0:11:06.2) TELL ME A TRUE STORY ABOUT THAT HAPPENING.**

**Female respondent:** I have a client that I've known for pretty much my whole life and we didn't realize it. Meeting as adults, she was my dentist assistant my whole childhood. She's a Christian and she asked me if I'd be offended by her listening to Christian radio talk shows or whatever during the day, and I said, "No, I'm very interested in the subject; I'm just not a practicing Christian myself." We would listen to them and she would ask me questions like, "Have you ever lied?" I'd say, "Sure." She would say, "Have you ever stolen?" "Yes." These very basic questions and I don't think that there's a person alive who can say that they haven't done these things and I'm pretty upfront about it. She looked at me almost a little scared that I didn't have a religion that I was backing up, that I wasn't saying penance every day for my sins. They really try to put an effort towards saving me. It's little pieces at a time, not too pushy because I'll take the conversation, educate it in other directions, and ask questions that they don't have explanations for. There's a lot of wanting to save me.

**(0:12:12.8) WHAT DOES CHRISTIANITY CONJURE FOR THE REST OF YOU?**

**Female respondent:** I had cancer last year and I was on so many prayer lists. It was amazing. Everyone immediately says that, "I'm praying for you."

**(0:12:30.9) WHAT WAS YOUR REACTION?**

**Female respondent:** Thank you. They're coming from a genuine place, so I don't want to say, "I'm atheist, you can say it all you want." Yes, I was on a lot of prayer lists. It was bizarre.

**(0:12:51.5) DOES THAT CREATE AN OBLIGATION FOR YOU?**

**Female respondent:** Not from the people that I was associated with, that I was on their prayer lists. Nobody ever asked me to go to church, nobody ever asked me to drink the Kool-Aid or whatever.

**(0:13:25.8) SOMEBODY ELSE.**

**Female respondent:** People saying end of the world.

**(0:13:29.9) WHO SAYS THAT?**

**Female respondent:** Or the Rapture.

**Female respondent:** Yes, sometimes my mom and sometimes other relatives say, “If you read the Revelations this is going to happen. Everything’s happening in the world. Corruption and the wars.” It’s always been that way. There’s always been, people have been dying all these years, and my mom’s always like, “You better read your Bible. This is going to happen, this is going to happen.” I feel like I’m forced to do something that we’re already aware of and it’s been happening.

**(0:14:05.0) CHRISTIANITY.**

**Female respondent:** It comes to me as love, love and embracing with rules and guidelines. I think that there is, I’m a very faith-based individual, extremely, actually. I think that there is a lot of love and acceptance through Christianity. There’s a lot of compassion, a lot of positives, but with that I also think that society puts a lot of conformity around that, things that you need to do in order to equal them or achieve . . . let’s see, how else can I . . . that’s the best way to see it.

**Female respondent:** To be a good Christian.

**Female respondent:** Yes. I’ll use my mother as an example. It’s great that you have faith, but when’s the last time you’ve been to church? It’s great that you read the Bible, but when’s the last time you’ve been to church?

**(0:14:58.0) THAT’S WHAT SHE SAYS TO YOU?**

**Female respondent:** Yes, and that to me is a conformity. As a Witness, you grow up reading the book, you grow up, you definitely gobble the Kool-Aid if you want to survive. To me, Christianity comes with conformity, unfortunately.

**Female respondent:** There’s also specific types of Christians that I find to be a little scarier than the others. I had a friend when I was in elementary school, grade school . . . actually, I think it was middle school, it was sixth grade. I got together with her to work on a project for our math class and she decided to start talking to me about religion at eleven years old. Started asking me all these personal questions and said, “Do you believe in God?” I said, “I believe in something, but I don’t know that I’d necessarily call it God.” She went, “Are you a born-again Christian?” I said, “No.” She told me, “If you’re not a born-again Christian, you’re going to hell.” At eleven years old, telling me that I’m going to hell. Then she sat me down in her living room and made me watch a movie called *A Distant Thunder*, which is

all about people on earth who are marked with the sign of the beast and they decide to be born again, and the ones that didn't were going to hell. These are the movies that as a child she was watching, her parents would put on for her. There's a whole series of them. If you IMDb it, it's really, really terrifying.

**Female respondent:** What religion is this?

**Female respondent:** This was born-again Christians, and she said that if you weren't born again then you were going to hell. I said, "Doesn't that kind of follow along the reincarnation sort of?"

**Female respondent:** She said you were going to hell or you might not go to heaven?

**Female respondent:** She said you were going to hell.

**Female respondent:** You were going to hell.

**Female respondent:** Straight up, you were going to hell, just going to burn. That's it. That was one of the crazier experiences I had with religious people. The different segments and groups of Christian; born again and nondenominational and this and that. They all have their opinion. "If you're not my Christian, then you're not right," in a way.

**Julie:** Fear. Yes, I (0:17:20.8 unclear/crosstalk).

### **(0:17:21.3) THEIR FEAR OR YOURS?**

**Julie:** Them putting fear into people, and not necessarily like an, "Oh my gosh I am afraid" kind of a fear. More like you were talking about. If you don't do X, Y, and Z, you're not going to go to the pearly gates kind of thing. They have you in this box of restrictions and your conformity, but in a greater effort to save your ass. Everyone fears death, right, the unknown? That's one commonality we all have is we're all going to die and we don't know what to expect. In an effort to manage that fear, Christianity and religion as a whole has put together some sort of list of rules to give you that hope. At the same time they literally put the fear of God into you.

### **(0:18:17.1) IS THERE A STORY FROM YOUR LIFE THAT TURNED YOU OFF TO CHRISTIANITY?**

**Julie:** No, there's not a specific story in general. It's twenty-some years of going to a Lutheran grade school and then Catholic high school, Catholic university. It's been, I don't want to say jammed down my throat because it wasn't necessarily jammed, but it was certainly an everyday part of what was communicated there.

### **(0:18:46.8) YOU WERE RAISED IN IT, IN PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS.**

**Julie:** Right, yes. Right. Fear certainly goes along with that.

**Female respondent:** That's exactly what I was thinking was fear. As she said, fear and hope. So many people have to have something to believe in because they're fearful of the future, of the unknown. Then they want something to hope for, too, and when you say, "Christianity," they need to have hope for the

future or fear of the future so they bring in their religions as something to look forward to or something to be hopeful for. I don't know exactly how to explain it, but it was the same type concept as what she was saying. Fear or hope for the unknown.

**Female respondent:** I think it's a survival thing, too. *(One respondent agreed.)* Fear of dying.

**Julie:** Right.

**Female respondent:** And then being nothing. You want to believe that there's something else.

**Julie:** That there's something else after this, yes. Exactly.

**(0:19:43.8) MOST OF YOU WERE ASKED IF YOU HAVE A SPIRITUAL NATURE. THAT'S A PIECE OF IT, CORRECT?**

**Julie:** Much. *(One respondent agreed.)* It is, it's a much different piece.

**Female respondent:** One of the words that we didn't throw in here because we went down a different avenue but it makes a difference to me because, at least my opinion, is money. The Catholic churches and the Christian churches are really big. I was a kid who was interested in education.

**Female respondent:** They pass around the basket.

**Female respondent:** Yes, and I wanted to go to religious education classes to be educated, and my mom was a single parent with five kids, She worked two jobs and didn't have a lot of money and they wanted 10 to 15 percent of her paycheck or they wanted her to donate her time. She was a single parent; there's only so many hours in the day. They just didn't allow it. She was a nurse on the weekend working swing shifts and they pretty much turned me away. That was my first turn off to the church, was, "Okay, we don't make enough money for me to come here, but then you want to ask me later in life if I have a personal relationship with God." I cuss him out a few times a week, a month, depending on what my life's like, so I consider that pretty personal. I don't have to put into a basket to do it. Every year my family takes in somebody randomly off the street for Thanksgiving. We've taken in families with small children to avoid the going to CPS. We do things out of the kindness of our heart that we can afford to give without need for a tax write-off or to get something back. Just because we have a connection to other people and a responsibility, a feeling that says we should help where we can. That's one thing that really turns me off from any religion, organized of any kind, is that there's really a push for your money.

**Female respondent:** That's so interesting that you say that. My father, as a child, a Baptist minister he used to tell me was the best salesman in the world to convince people to sell faith and to sell hope and to get them to openly provide their funds. That is interesting that you say that. That was his view, and if you asked him he would tell you. Best salesperson around because it's the hardest job there is because you're asking someone to give them your money literally for what other reason? Hope and gratitude, I suppose.

**Female respondent:** It's almost like guiltning them into it, too. If you don't do this, we're all going to look down on you. *(One respondent agreed.)* That's why they pass around that basket at church in front of everybody. Somebody hands you the basket and you pass it away and you get three dirty looks.

**Female respondent:** You don't want to be the person, "Okay."

**Female respondent:** I'll say, again, I was baptized Catholic and non-practicing, but when I was fifteen years old I had a baby that passed away, I had a preterm labor. The baby's father was Mormon and the Mormon Church stepped in and really took over and they paid for the casket, they paid for the burial, they paid for everything. I've been on the receiving end of a church helping out and providing, so it's not that I think that they don't do useful things, but I also run a nonprofit organization and I understand what that means. That means that I can write paychecks that are appropriate to the market and then decide what to do with what's left of the money after we ran our business. At the end of the day that's how I look at a church. They're a nonprofit organization, but they have a license to pay people and then adequately spend the money in a way that doesn't make them look too bad to the public eye when they report annually to the government.

**Female respondent:** Fair enough.

#### **(0:23:18.6) CAN YOU HELP EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND CHRISTIANITY?**

**Female respondent:** I can definitely. I look at church as an organization. It's a structural component of choice that provides, for many it provides a solid outline to what works for them. Christianity, because I would consider myself a Christian, but I would say Christianity is a faith-based system that is independently owned and operated by you. I think there's a big difference in that.

#### **(0:24:07.3) WHAT IS CHURCH TO YOU?**

**Female respondent:** I think it's a building. That's all it is to me; it's just a building, plain and simple. No different than the building that we're sitting in right now.

#### **(0:24:35.1) GOING TO CHURCH IS SIMPLY THE ACT OF GOING TO A PLACE?**

**Female respondent:** Yes. More or less.

#### **(0:24:45.3) WHAT DOES CHURCH MEAN TO YOU?**

**Leah:** Sorry. It's the building where people with similar interests gather and share their interests. I don't really think of it as very spiritual or anything. It has to be more personal. It's to spread the word and to teach people how to teach people what you think. *(0:25:23.7 Unclear/crosstalk)* and brainwashing.

#### **(0:25:29.7) HOW IS CHRISTIANITY DIFFERENT FROM CHURCH WHERE PEOPLE WITH SIMILAR INTERESTS TRY TO TELL YOU STUFF?**

**Leah:** I don't know. It seems really, to me, personal. It's your own relationship and your opinions and you should respect other people's opinions. I haven't got a lot of (0:25:51.9 unclear) that way, so I don't know.

**Julie:** Christianity is the greater idea, and church is the actual structure, the building. It's where you go and exercise that greater theory or philosophy or whatever.

**(0:26:22.9) OR FEAR.**

**Julie:** Or fear, the fear of God, right.

**Female respondent:** In my experience, I'm going to call it a crutch. I think that even being religious in your living room, being any kind of Christian is more spiritual in my opinion than gathering at a church. It's unfortunate that the people who seem to talk to God most are those people who are incarcerated. You find that people who have addictions and a weak personality, that are leadable, tend to need a crutch to get them through. They can't stand in their own conviction and their own belief. They need a support system in order to have something to connect to. My sister-in-law is a felon and we moved her out here for a time period to try and help her restart her life and do what was right for her kids. I'm gypsy and have all kinds of weird beliefs. My dad prays to Odin, all kinds of different beliefs, but I grew up with a set of beliefs that if you think positively positive things happen and you get back in the world what you put out and things like that. My sister-in-law moved out here, she was a little bit weak and she was really looking for something to crutch onto and we watched the movie, I don't know if anybody's seen it, but the movie *The Secret*. As we were watching through it, I laughed through the whole thing because I didn't know it was a secret.

**Female respondent:** It's just a way of life. (*Laughter.*) (0:27:52.9 Unclear/laughter). It's so true.

**Female respondent:** The part that really cracked me up was when he said, "If you want a parking spot at the front door, you just drive to the front door." I was raised that way; I don't know anything else. I'm going to park at the front and that's just where I go. My sister-in-law is always like, "Oh, Eeyore, cake rocks, nothing works my way." She very mopey. When she watched the movie she cried. She had this emotional connection and this breakthrough and wanted to find a church and actually said the words, "I kind of feel like I need to go back to prison because I enjoyed the structure there." I was like, "What? Wait. Ouch. I don't understand, you've got kids, you should want to live and experience and share and touch other people and hope for good things and experience pain and cry and all of those things." She's just afraid and needed that crutch of an NA class or an AA class. You're not going to get through the week unless you can go and have your meeting, and I'm not that kind of a person. I'm more of an individual than that. I don't like to be told what to do.

**Female respondent:** NA and AA are religious based.

**Female respondent:** Yes.

**Female respondent:** Or Christian based.

**Female respondent:** Really? I didn't know that.

**(0:29:00.9) AA AND NA ARE?**

**Female respondent:** Yes. *(One respondent agreed.)*

**Female respondent:** I also think the reason why criminals, felons, turn to it is because it's acceptance. Religion's always accepting to all kinds. If you murder somebody they feel deep inside that God's going to forgive them, so that's why they turn to that. I forgot what I was going to say, but I understand where you're coming from about the acceptance part.

**(0:29:29.7) THAT'S A GOOD POINT.**

**Female respondent:** When you talk about church and Christianity, Christianity is a belief and the church is the clubhouse that you go to.

**Female respondent:** Yes, that's what I meant to say, like an extended family. You know they're always going to be there. You know there's going to be an older person that you look at as a mom and dad.

**Female respondent:** Yes, they're always going to be there for you to go to at that place.

**Female respondent:** Only if you think the same.

**Female respondent:** Yes, but that doesn't necessarily mean that you're a Christian and your beliefs are the . . . the church is just the building that holds the place to talk to, to go congregated and talk. Your Christianity is your spiritual belief to maybe how you're raised or what you believe in. I don't think that they're one and the same at all.

**(0:30:23.7) TELL ME AN EXPERIENCE YOU'VE HAD WITH CHRISTIANS, SPECIFICALLY THE PEOPLE.**

**Female respondent:** They're a little closed minded based on the information that they've been taught.

**(0:30:45.6) WHAT WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE?**

**Female respondent:** I've had a couple experiences, family members. I have a brother-in-law who was Catholic and kind of a screwup in his teen years. Then decided as an adult he was going to become a Christian, really went into it. They know everything, they want to argue every point with you and, quite frankly, it's hard to believe. Even if the book was completely right, just the basis of translation between languages leaves room for error. We're here thousands of years after the book was written, if you will, and they seem very, "No, but this is the word. This is how it was said, and this is . . ." Then I look at it as very contradictory because you're going to say things like the Rapture and you're going to worry about certain dates. If you read the book, the book says that you're not supposed to try and figure out what date's what. It's very contradictory. They seem to be very know-it-all and it leads to arguments because they're not open minded, where somebody who's agnostic or somebody who's even Jewish is going to

be a lot more open in conversation. They understand right from the word go that their belief system is different and there's more tolerance.

**Female respondent:** That still also depends on the person that you run into. I find there are a lot of Christians that have tried to force their beliefs on me and tell me, "This is what you should believe." I've run into a lot of atheists that have tried to force their beliefs on me. I have a friend who—

**Female respondent:** But that's okay. *(Laughter.)*

**Female respondent:** Seriously. I have a friend whose sister is dying of cancer and she is extremely religious and she believes in God, but my friend is an atheist. She was talking about, "It's okay because I know there is a God and I know I'm going to meet him." What he told her in the time of her needing her faith the most for her was, "Don't be silly; there is no God. You're not going anywhere. You're going to die and that's it." To me, anybody that forces their beliefs on other people, I immediately shut down and stop listening. I've had atheist friends that are just as judgmental and just as close minded as Christian friends. Really, it is a lot about just the person themselves. An a\*\*\*\*\* is still an a\*\*\*\*\* and it doesn't matter what their faith is.

**Female respondent:** That's true.

**Female respondent:** It really doesn't matter.

#### **(0:33:11.9) I SAW THOSE QUOTE MARKS.**

**Female respondent:** I should just have quote marks around me for everything that comes out.

**Female respondent:** I've found a lot of Christians are fake happy, yes. Like, "My life is great because I have God and my kid isn't really a junkie because I have faith in God and everything's wonderful." They seem a little too happy. It's creepy.

#### **(0:33:43.8) DOES IT FEEL ARTIFICIAL OR COULD NO ONE POSSIBLY BE THAT HAPPY?**

**Female respondent:** Both. Yes. Some people are deluded and then other people are faking it.

**Female respondent:** I have a total thought process to piggyback on that. Oh my goodness, you're so true, so right with that. My sister is a prime example to the letter. I love it, love it. I've got to share. My seventeen-year-old, he's recently definitely going through seventeen, and my sister's solution, mind you her and I have never gotten along, all of a sudden I get this call because I look at her Facebook and her Facebook post is, "I'm praying for you." I pray daily, sometimes minute by minute, honestly, depending on the day. Anyway, she reaches out and she's praying for me. Really? Share with me, why do I matter all of a sudden? I don't matter when I'm in your household, family dinner, but I matter all of a sudden and you're real concerned, right? The reason for her doing that is because in her community, in her religious belief it's very important to pray for your family. She goes out of her way to call me and her husband. I cannot stand her husband—he's an addict, he's abusive, he's a jerk, he's an alcoholic, he beats her. Are you kidding me? Why are you calling me and certainly why would I ever ask you to pray

for me? No thank you, your purity is tarnished. She calls me and they go out of their way and they said, “I have a solution. I was praying for you and God gave me a solution.” Okay, I’m always open to listening to solutions. She says, “My solution is that you pray for past sins.” Okay, tell me more. I said, “Tell me more. What do you mean pray for past sins?” She said, “Maybe Brandon,” that’s my son, “is being haunted, or taunted rather, by old family spirits that you need to let go of for his sake.” That’s interesting, I was thinking it was just because he’s my kid and I’m a pretty difficult personality at times, but okay. I need to pray for peoples’ past sins. How do I pray for them if I don’t know what their sins were and I’ve never met them? That’s wild, right? I use that as an example because that’s her solution to become a solutions-driven individual and a loving family member and to express her care and desire to fake her caring. Really? I’m serious, I don’t live anywhere—I cannot stand this person. My sister is not my best friend at all, but she goes through those motions, so to speak, to go to my mother to be like, “Mom, here’s what I do to help our family. Here’s my concern level.” When you said that that was immediately what I thought of, fake happy. If you go into their home, I’m not kidding, these are two people that are core addicts, literally drink all the time, destructive people to the core. Core, core, core destructive. They drive a youth ministry and their core is by feeding children overseas, they spend a massive amount of time in Mexico and the Philippines feeding children and dedicating their lifeline to their religious community, but behind the scenes they dabble in methamphetamines. It’s horrible.

**Female respondent:** It’s okay because they pray for them, though.

**Female respondent:** Right, it’s really bizarre. I’ll give you an example: I went over for a birthday once and I wanted to have a glass of wine and I was not allowed to because church family was there. I went to the road, sat out on the road (*laughter*), and had my glass of wine. All right, you know? Then they all left, she cracked a bottle of wine as they walked out the door. It’s like, “Wow.”

#### **(0:37:37.9) HER SOLUTION WAS FOR YOU TO PRAY?**

**Female respondent:** Isn’t it nuts? It’s nuts. Yes, I don’t know. (0:37:45.5 *Unclear/crosstalk*). I guess we have the ancestry that sins. I have to tell you, I got such a kick out of that solution, I don’t know.

**Female respondent:** Synergy.

**Female respondent:** I’ve heard of some crazy stuff.

#### **(0:37:55.8) IT’S A GREAT STORY TO SHARE.**

**Female respondent:** It’s crazy. It’s crazy. My wife’s comment was, “Well, okay, I suppose if you could write an org chart of the family, the family tree, and burn it and say—”

**Female respondent:** Org chart.

**Female respondent:** (0:38:14.4 *Unclear/crosstalk*).

**Female respondent:** We’re Jehovah Witness, we have a huge family. Honestly, no one uses birth control, right, so it would be a real long willow. (*Laughter.*) A huge weeping willow. Oh, my God.

**(0:38:33.6) THAT WAS GOOD.**

**Female respondent:** It was interesting. The sad part is, it's true. *(Laughter.) (0:38:53.0 Unclear/crosstalk/laughter).*

**(0:38:58.7) DOES ANYONE ELSE HAVE A CHRISTIAN STORY? JESUS IS NEXT.**

**Female respondent:** Yay.

**Female respondent:** I was thinking about it.

**(0:39:10.3) WHAT DID YOU THINK OF WHEN I SAY "JESUS"?**

**Female respondent:** Confusion.

**Female respondent:** Mel Gibson.

**Female respondent:** I think of humor too, because everything is like, "Save me, Jeebus." There's always . . . you never know what the Internet means and stuff, so that's all I think of.

**Female respondent:** I see an excuse.

**Female respondent:** Partly mythical. There's so many different definitions of Jesus. He's different in every religion. In some cases he's a prophet, in some cases he's the savior. Who the hell is this guy really?

**Female respondent:** Apparently by some accounts he was Jewish, but if you're Jewish you don't believe in him as a savior. *(One respondent agreed.)*

**Leah:** Yes, I don't really get it. There's too many stories, you can't really get it straight.

**(0:40:07.8) WHAT STORIES DON'T FIT?**

**Leah:** Is he real? That was a long time ago, so lost in translation, some accounts.

**(0:40:26.4) WHAT ABOUT HIM DOESN'T SEEM REAL? IS IT THE STORIES OR THE THINGS HE SUPPOSEDLY DID?**

**Leah:** I don't really know much about him, so I guess I should probably educate myself more about . . . before I say.

**(0:40:41.9) I WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU DO KNOW.**

**Leah:** He had a beard. *(Laughter.)* He helped people, but I think people twisted that image to their own benefit. I like the helping people part.

**Female respondent:** He also had blue eyes and was from Palestine, I think, so that makes perfect sense.

**(0:41:09.0) SAID SARCASTICALLY.**

**Female respondent:** Right, it's very sarcastic.

**Female respondent:** I think of intimacy. That's the word that comes to my mind, is intimacy. Mm-hmm. *(Affirmative.)*

**(0:41:18.3) ANY OTHER WORDS? TAKE YOUR WORD FURTHER.**

**Female respondent:** I think the base of it, I've studied a lot of religions, is that there is such a difference in story. I'd say in my lifetime, what I have been exposed to, the physical picture of Jesus has changed in a lot of different publications and what you see, which leaves even more argument and confusion.

**(0:41:45.4) YOU MEAN THE ILLUSTRATION?**

**Female respondent:** Yes, and because I look at religion from probably a different aspect than anybody in the room, being that I use it for a specific kind of research that super interests me. Every culture on the planet from dot on the forehead Indian to Indian Indians, they all have a shared story that I can get on board with. That's that somebody came who didn't belong and made changes and surprised people and said, "I'll be back." It's a pretty basic story through every culture that there is. We can get really basic. It's not very confusing. We don't know a lot because we weren't here, but it's pretty basic. The confusion comes between the fact that everybody'll say that there's the word Judeo-Christian, so people don't understand what the major difference is between Christian religions and Jewish religions. That is the savior, whether or not you believe that he was actually the savior or the prophet or whether you believe that he was just a living, breathing, walking carpenter. There's two lines of the argument. It's which story do you believe that we've been told, because you've got two basic arguments on whatever religion you go to, you either believe this side or this side. Whether they're still waiting or he's already been here and we're waiting for him to come back.

**(0:43:04.5) THAT'S FOR ANY RELIGION?**

**Female respondent:** Pretty much all the way across there's a Jesus story, yes. That fits in. He's called something different in every culture, but some of the original stories that are out there, whether they're in the Bible or they're in other books like the book of Gilgamesh or other religious texts, they do reference a descriptive value to what the person who we're told that Jesus was looked like. It usually isn't matched to the area that they were, neither is any other individual leader that you could pick out in any one religion. They don't usually look like where they're at. From my perspective I think it leads to a lot of confusion as to why would that person look so different? We live in Phoenix, so a Mexican is a brown-haired, dark-eyed individual. It's what we're used to seeing, but quite frankly, in Mexico City Mexicans look like you. They're absolutely out of character. When you think of the origin of a person who didn't belong infiltrating genetically into a group of people and making some changes to an area, it gives me a belief that I never had in my whole life that I learned to appreciate. There is the possibility that there was a person, whether he was just a carpenter or not, whether he did amazing things or not.

**(0:44:29.8) THIS IS CONFUSION?**

**Female respondent:** I would say it definitely is confusion because people don't know who he is to even know what to expect from him. They don't know who he was in the story, they don't really know what to believe. Was he married, was he not married? Was he magic, was he just . . . There's a lot of confusion.

**(0:44:45.1) THERE ARE TOO MANY STORIES AND DESCRIPTIONS?**

**Female respondent:** That also changes. Recently they started doing studies, especially with science. No, he was very dark skinned, had very dark hair. Then no, he wasn't a carpenter, he was actually something else. People are now coming out and saying all kinds of different things about him. Then, "Yes, if we trace this bloodline then we can see that there are some people now that could be walking around that are descendants of him." There's all of these constant changes.

**(0:45:15.8) IS THAT GOOD OR NOT?**

**Female respondent:** It further proves that people don't really know.

**Female respondent:** It further makes the story unbelievable because there isn't a consensus.

**(0:45:25.5) INTIMACY.**

**Female respondent:** I think of the word "Jesus" as a being. I think of it as a feeling. I think of it as a friend. I think of it as a very intimate, close, near your relationship. I've had some seriously religious experiences where I've seen, felt, with my eyes and my body, him next to me. For me it's a very intimate thought.

**Female respondent:** I think that Jesus is the idea that bridges the gap between faith and religion.

**Female respondent:** That's interesting.

**Female respondent:** From my perspective.

**Female respondent:** Honestly, he's a character in a book that brought hope to people many years ago.

**(0:46:18.3) DOES HE BRING HOPE TO PEOPLE TODAY?**

**Female respondent:** Yes. They're assuming people still have to have something to believe in and he allows, the thought of him, or he allows people to have hope; hope that he's going to come back or hope, whatever it is, it's a form of hope.

**(0:46:40.5) WHAT'S SAID ABOUT JESUS THAT IS BELIEVABLE?**

**Female respondent:** That they killed him.

**(0:46:54.0) HE WAS A GUY AND HE DIED. IN OTHER WORDS, HE LIVED?**

**Female respondent:** I think (0:47:09.6 unclear/crosstalk).

**Female respondent:** It's believable that he existed. That is pretty much the only thing that is believable to me, is that he existed. My boyfriend, actually, he graduated with a psychology degree and he's applying for his masters. He studied all kinds of things from the religious center that we have in the brain. He said that the translations from way back then could've very well been mistranslated because when he said, "I am the son of God," it could've just been, "I am a son of God." When you said, "I am a son of something," that meant, "I follow this." Not necessarily that he was actually the Immaculate Conception son of God, but he was just somebody that believed in God.

**(0:48:03.7) TRANSITION THAT WHAT THINGS ARE SAID ABOUT HIM THAT ARE BELIEVABLE.**

**Female respondent:** He existed, simply that.

**Female respondent:** I believe it's possible that he was a healer. I believe that there are humans right now on this planet that walk that have healing properties to them. (*One respondent agreed.*) I believe that it was possible that he was a healer and given the time . . . there was no explanation for what it was that he was doing and considering the long-term position that the church takes on magic as a word. I think that it's more believable than not that those things happened and they look for different ways to explain them to keep control. (*One respondent agreed.*)

**(0:48:49.7) WHAT ELSE IS SAID ABOUT JESUS THAT AREN'T CREDIBLE?**

**Female respondent:** There's the whole Immaculate Conception thing. I have a hard time believing one day you wake up and you're knocked up. There's a disconnect there for me. Then also the whole resurrection. That's obviously a big faith thing. I do have faith, and Christian-leaning faith, but if we're going to talk about what's difficult to believe, and this is where you have to find your faith strings, you've got to be kidding me. This guy died and then he's in a tomb and he's gone? They washed him.

**Female respondent:** Came out of a cave.

**(0:49:39.4) THAT'S NOT BELIEVABLE?**

**Female respondent:** That's where you've got to say, yes, that's where you've got to grab your faith, if you know what I mean. If you're going to believe that and go that route, it's . . . If someone were to come up and tell me that they just saw someone rise into the sky, I'd tell them that they were bats\*\*\* crazy.

**Female respondent:** Those stories, again, to me, those are the stories that made me walk away from ever wanting to be part of religion, into a religious organized church whatsoever. When you ask them, I'm sure you've all asked, "Where were the dinosaurs in the Bible?" Everybody laughed and didn't talk to you. They don't want to answer those questions. In taking the story, the historical story of the Bible, and then applying it to New Age ideas, the story actually becomes more believable than it ever has been. If you take the Discovery Channel into account, and there are theories right now of ancient aliens, and you

take the idea of there being somebody who didn't belong in an area that came. That person could leave just as quickly as the way that they came in if they were put there. Again, every culture has a person that didn't belong who was there who made an impact and promised to return—with new ideas. I'm personally Rh negative. I don't know if anybody else in the room is Rh negative or knows what being Rh negative is, but my blood type represents 15 percent of the United States of America as a whole group and about 7 percent of the planet as a whole. Scientifically there is no known origin for my type on the planet. They can go with the theories of monkeys to explain human culture if you want to go that way. There's all sorts of ways that they can explain it, but they can't explain me. That gives me a different perspective, because I share a pool with a very small group of people, and I could sit in this room right now and I could pick out at least four people in this room that I could prove within a five-minute conversation come from this very same small gene pool that I do and don't know it. We tend to draw towards each other.

**(0:51:46.2) HOW DOES THAT IMPACT YOUR PERCEPTION?**

**Female respondent:** If I don't come from the same place as the other 85 percent of the planet, where do I come from? In the Bible there are so many stories that are missing or not indulged upon. There's two creation stories in the Bible's first ten pages. There's a lot of argument.

**(0:52:09.1) WHAT DOES THAT MEAN TO YOU?**

**Female respondent:** It makes me question and want to learn more about it and realize that things might be possible that you didn't think were possible and you didn't have all of the information.

**(0:52:18.8) ANCIENT ALIEN COULD APPLY TO JESUS?**

**Female respondent:** It's an explanation for how he could be here, as far as a person; how we could all be here. If something happened to this planet now and we were shipped off to Mars, you would start a whole race there and nobody would know anything and two thousand years later trying to figure that mess out and how you got there if you don't have written proof.

**Female respondent:** Who knows?

**(0:52:40.3) WHAT STORIES ARE OUT THERE ABOUT JESUS?**

**Female respondent:** Where he took the bread.

**Female respondent:** The Last Supper.

**Female respondent:** Yes, and he fed . . . I don't even know. I'm sorry, I don't, I'm so *(0:52:53.9 unclear/crosstalk)*.

**Female respondent:** He took the bread and he fed how many people with it?

**Female respondent:** Like two thousand. The fish thing, yes, the loaves.

**(0:52:58.8) THE LOAVES AND FISHES THING, WHERE HE DID THE FISH AND THE BREAD?**

**Female respondent:** Yes.

**Female respondent:** He could turn water into wine, but that's fantastic. That's a good day.

**Female respondent:** One of the stories that comes to mind is when he found Mary Magdalene at the well. I still think they had an affair.

**Female respondent:** Yes.

**Female respondent:** I really *(0:53:22.4 unclear/doubt that)*. I do. Good for Jesus, though, right? He had the water, he turned it into wine, and then he met Mary, the prostitute. I don't know, that's one that definitely rings a bell for me.

**(0:53:35.5) WHAT STORIES DO YOU KNOW?**

**Female respondent:** I don't know if it's the correct story, the lamb, where they sacrificed the lamb?

**(0:53:43.8) WAS THAT IN THE DESERT OR THE TEMPLE?**

**Female respondent:** I think it was in the desert.

**Female respondent:** I know there is walking on water and that seems a little unbelievable.

**(0:54:00.1) IT SEEMS A LOT OF THE STORIES YOU'VE HEARD ARE HARD TO BELIEVE.**

**Female respondent:** I think they're symbolic. I don't think they're necessarily . . . He didn't actually walk on water, I'm sure it had another meaning. I don't know what it is. Yes, and I think that every story, if you look at it from a psych view, I think they're all emotion based. There's an emotional derivative that comes to the core. Human nature is to take the things that happen around us with our baseline experiences and to mold those into our perceptual *(sic)* reality.

**Female respondent:** That's human nature.

**Female respondent:** Yes, so I think that most stories, whether they were written fifty thousand years ago or written today, if you have a pulse it's pretty consistent.

**Female respondent:** Those stories change and evolve over time. It's like a game of telephone. What you tell me and I tell her is going to be something different *(one respondent agreed)* by the time it gets to her. Stretch that out over thousands of years, you've got . . .

**Female respondent:** Different languages.

**Female respondent:** You've got a bunch of muck.

**(0:55:16.5) WHAT ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIANITY DO YOU FIND OBJECTIONABLE? ONE YOU'VE MENTIONED IS MONEY.**

**Female respondent:** Forcible opinions, I guess.

**Female respondent:** Pressures.

**Female respondent:** Yes.

**(0:55:56.4) TELL ME ABOUT FORCING THE OPINION.**

**Female respondent:** The inability to accept simple disagreement.

**(0:56:09.3) IT'S THEIR WAY.**

**Female respondent:** Yes.

**Female respondent:** Or, I went to a Christian university for a little while and in one of my classes we had a discussion. It was an ethics class and we had a discussion about how religion affects your ability to be ethical. Basically they said to us that if you're not Christian, then you couldn't possibly be ethical or have morals.

**(0:56:38.3) IF YOU'RE NOT CHRISTIAN, YOU COULDN'T BE ETHICAL?**

**Female respondent:** Or have morals.

**Female respondent:** Intriguing.

**Female respondent:** Yes.

**(0:56:45.6) ONLY CHRISTIANS HAVE ETHICS AND MORALS?**

**Female respondent:** Yes. If you're out there loose and the crazy kids, you don't really have anything to reign you back in.

**Female respondent:** A value-based system, huh? So unless you're a Christian, no value-based system. That's interesting.

**Female respondent:** That was a college course, too.

**Female respondent:** Wow.

**(0:57:01.6) ANOTHER ELEMENT OF CHRISTIANITY THAT BUGS YOU.**

**Female respondent:** Judgment. I'll give you the famous example as a gay woman. My mother is the reason that I came out, but she's the same person that tells me I'm going to go to hell. It's okay if my

wife slept on the couch for the last fifteen years; it would've been a perfectly okay arrangement because we would've had the buddy system going on.

**(0:57:26.4) IT WAS ABOUT SEX?**

**Female respondent:** I guess so. I don't know that she even knows that happens. What if that doesn't even happen in my bedroom? What if? What if I'm just choosing to save money and not buy two queen beds? What if? After fifteen years how often do you think it really happens anyway? Really? (0:57:46.5 *Unclear/laughter*). I don't know.

**(0:57:51.9) GIVE ME SOMETHING ELSE ON JUDGMENT.**

**Female respondent:** For Catholics specifically, in high school I went to St. Mary's downtown and we, I think it was once a month, had confession. I didn't go because I was a Protestant Christian, not a Catholic Christian. I didn't go down there to confession, but these priests from around the valley would sit on the gym floor, and then you'd go and you'd file down there and you'd sit there and tell Father F\*\*\*o what you've done wrong in life. He's the one, he's your path to God. How is someone who is, as a human, just as sinful as me telling me that, "Okay, daughter of Christ, your sins are forgiven"? I have issues with that. If I want to get forgiven, I'll go to the big guy myself.

**Female respondent:** I blame the Italians. (*Laughter.*)

**Female respondent:** There's lots of judgment on everything. How much you drink, if you do drugs, if you're a stripper, if you're a prostitute.

**Female respondent:** The way you dress.

**Female respondent:** If you swear.

**Female respondent:** The way you dress and if you swear.

**Female respondent:** They have everything. (*One respondent agreed.*)

**Female respondent:** You don't go to church, you don't bring your kids to church, you don't teach them of our religion.

**Female respondent:** For single women living with their boyfriends, you're being judged for that. It's a sin.

**(0:59:13.7) PROBABLY A LOT.**

**Female respondent:** Yes.

**(0:59:15.5) YOU'RE LIVING IN SIN.**

**Female respondent:** It's cute when they go to that. Live in sin, right? My mom's been married eight times and she won't have sex before marriage. *(Laughter.)*

**Female respondent:** Eight times?

**Female respondent:** Eight times.

**Female respondent:** Really?

**Female respondent:** Yes. She can no longer be a part of, obviously, the JW religion, but eight times. Now, I give her, granted, she was, I don't know how you lose four husbands, but four of those were deaths. Either the woman drives them crazy, I don't know. She's the coolest woman in the world, but honestly, eight husbands? Yes, she was excommunicated because of divorce. They found out and it's not tolerated. That's a solid judgment.

**Female respondent:** She has to get married if she wants to *(0:59:54.2 unclear/crosstalk)*.

**Female respondent:** She is obviously highly functional at her age.

#### **(0:59:59.5) OTHER ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIANITY YOU FIND OBJECTIONABLE?**

**Female respondent:** Study habits. A lot of Christianity believes in solid religious study habits. What if you can't read? What if you're deaf and blind, then what do you do?

**Female respondent:** I think the church itself, the building. You're expected to be there, to be part of the society and the group and do all the stuff that goes along with it.

**Female respondent:** Asking for forgiveness. *(One respondent agreed.)*

**Female respondent:** The hypocrisy.

#### **(1:00:55.9) TELL ME ABOUT FORGIVENESS.**

**Female respondent:** Asking for it, where you do something wrong. You talk about someone and then they want you to go and ask God for forgiveness because you called so and so a b\*\*\*\* or something.

#### **(1:01:13.8) DIFFERENT FROM CONFESSION, THAT'S WHY I ASKED. TALK TO ME ABOUT HYPOCRISY.**

**Female respondent:** These people are trying to live a righteous life and path and then they themselves are doing these bad things and they're trying to tell us that that's bad.

#### **(1:01:38.7) THEY'RE TRYING TO LIVE A GOOD LIFE BUT THEY KEEP SCREWING UP.**

**Female respondent:** Yes.

#### **(1:01:43.6) YOU'RE SAYING THEY'RE TRYING TO TELL YOU . . .**

**Female respondent:** Yes, that I need to live a certain way, and yet they're not.

**Female respondent:** They go home and pick up their pipe, but they go to church on Sunday.

**(1:01:54.4) THEY CRACK OPEN THE WINE.**

**Female respondent:** As they walk out the door. You've got to do something to deal with it, I guess. I don't know.

**Female respondent:** Also their ability to condemn. Each individual one seems to have the ability to tell you that you're going to hell. Who the hell are they to say? Condemnation, go to hell.

**Female respondent:** Another one is kids. A lot of the Christians that I've interacted with, they make it a big deal. Even if they can't save you, they have to pass on the information that if you don't accept Jesus Christ in your life, pass that information on to your kids. *(One respondent agreed.)* You might make it into heaven, but your kids aren't going. It's manipulative. That's another word for that board, it's very manipulative.

**(1:02:55.5) THE KIDS IS AN EXAMPLE OF THEM SAYING, "YOU MUST DO CERTAIN THINGS."**

**Female respondent:** I don't think all Christians, though, have that same opinion. For me, I think it was a born-again Christian that was very much like you needed to open, accept, and to push it on your kids in order for everybody to get a holy pass through the door. The same person told me that if what's-his-name, the one who ate people, the serial killer.

**Female respondent:** Dahmer.

**Female respondent:** Yes, Dahmer. If Jeffrey Dahmer was on his last dying breath and was honestly, truly sorry in his heart, that he'd get let into the gates of heaven and sit down at the table and eat with all of us people that have tried to do right.

**Female respondent:** But he'd be eating people. *(Laughter.)*

**Female respondent:** I don't know, *(1:03:40.3 unclear/crosstalk).*

**Female respondent:** It wouldn't be a normal dinner.

**Female respondent:** Is there another option?

**(1:03:42.6) IS HE ASKING FORGIVENESS?**

**Female respondent:** Yes. I don't care how much he asks for forgiveness, I don't want to sit at the table with him. If there's a third option I want to go there.

**Female respondent:** Part of the kids, too, is I think often times Christians push procreating. Having children is very much a big push, especially, your Catholics are real obvious. Probably not so much these days, it's a little bit (1:04:08.4 unclear/crosstalk).

**Female respondent:** An overview.

**Female respondent:** Yes. As a child I was deathly afraid of sex. Are you kidding me? I can't have birth control, what am I going to do? Oh my gosh. The crazy thing is that that goes on generations. My daughter feels that way and was not raised in a church. I think that's a big one with Christianity.

**(1:04:34.7) DO YOU HAVE EXAMPLES OF INTOLERANCE AMONG CHRISTIANS THAT STICK OUT IN YOUR MIND?**

**Female respondent:** I have a friend who was raised Jehovah Witness, and I think she was twelve or thirteen and chose to be baptized in the church because that's all she ever knew. Then when she grew up she had a different life. She became a stripper and drank and smoked and did all these things. Her mother literally is not allowed to talk to her.

**Female respondent:** Absolutely.

**Female respondent:** If she sees her in a store will not approach her, will not come up to her. She cannot acknowledge her daughter, but yet she has another daughter who did the same thing but did not get baptized and she can still talk to her. But because my friend chose at a young age to get baptized, her mother cannot speak to her.

**(1:05:42.1) YOU CAN GET BAPTIZED AS A JEHOVAH'S WITNESS?**

**Female respondent:** Yes, what it is is that once you accept Christ in your heart under the JW umbrella, you are now a member, very much like Mormons. Once you get listed in their books, you're a member for life. Same with Catholics, I believe. The moment that you step outside of that rule book . . . you're baptizing yourself into the rule book and once you step outside of that rule book you are no longer . . . you are who you hang out with, so you are excommunicated and you do not come back.

**Female respondent:** She said if she comes back that she has to spend . . . she can't talk to anybody else that's not a Jehovah Witness.

**Female respondent:** Until she studies.

**Female respondent:** She goes to church and they won't speak to her or acknowledge her for a month or something.

**Female respondent:** More than that, you have to actually go through a study program in order to become a part of the group and the actual, whoever leads that congregation has to okay, basically, coming back.

**(1:06:36.4) JEHOVAH'S WITNESS ISN'T CHRISTIAN, THOUGH, RIGHT?**

**Female respondent:** I would say absolutely.

**Female respondent:** It's a form of Christianity.

**Female respondent:** Yes, absolutely. It's a form of a power bigger than yourself that they believe ultimately is the savior. That's how I would classify a Christian to Buddhism—

**(1:06:53.6) WHAT OTHER GROUPS ARE IN CHRISTIANITY?**

**Female respondent:** I think Mormons would be in there. I think Catholics, I think Protestants, Lutherans.

**Female respondent:** Baptists.

**(1:07:04.7) SHE'S ALLOWED TO HAVE HER OPINION, BUT SO ARE YOU.**

**Female respondent:** I think she's spot on.

**Female respondent:** The list is shorter to say the ones that don't fit in. *(Two respondents agreed.)*

**Female respondent:** Protestants alone, there are so many denominations *(one respondent agreed)*, like Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist, yadda, yadda, yadda.

**Female respondent:** I'm going to say being Jewish or Muslim are the only two that really don't have the same secular beliefs, the small changes.

**Female respondent:** From a world religion, yes.

**(1:07:28.7) WHAT ABOUT HINDU OR BUDDHISM?**

**Female respondent:** They can all still fit in that space of . . .

**(1:07:35.2) THEY'RE NOT CHRISTIAN.**

**Female respondent:** They're not Christian, but they're more of the Judeo-Christian theory. Wiccanism isn't necessarily considered Christian either, but if you had to bundle it, it's going to fit more into that side than it's going to fit in the other side.

**(1:07:47.3) I DON'T WANT TO BUNDLE IT. I WANT CHRISTIANITY SPECIFICALLY. I DIDN'T KNOW JEHOVAH'S WITNESS AND MORMONS FIT INTO CHRISTIANITY.**

**Female respondent:** They're probably the stricter of all. I think the Catholics, Mormons, and Jews are probably the strictest of all sets of belief systems.

**Female respondent:** That's why *(1:08:16.2 unclear/crosstalk)*.

**Female respondent:** I feel like Mormons *(1:08:17.1 unclear/crosstalk)* with me.

**Female respondent:** Mormons are definitely, that's an interesting concept.

**Female respondent:** Way up there.

**Female respondent:** They try to pull you into the temple.

**Female respondent:** You're not allowed, though, in there. I tried—

**Female respondent:** They tried to baptize me right at the temple.

**Female respondent:** Really? They won't allow me. I tried for research purposes, I wasn't allowed in.

**Female respondent:** Maybe it's because they took my son into the church in the sense of things, but yes.

**(1:08:39.7) TELL ME ABOUT INTOLERANCE YOU ASSOCIATE WITH CHRISTIANITY.**

**Female respondent:** For me, obviously part of it is being a lesbian. Yes. From a *(1:08:54.1 unclear/crosstalk)*.

**(1:08:54.2) IS THAT REALLY PRESENT OR IS IT A QUIETER PROBLEM WITH CHRISTIANITY?**

**Female respondent:** For me it's a quieter problem. Overall it's an issue. It doesn't bother me too much. There are some churches, some denominations that have become much more open and welcoming to gay and lesbians. There are others that are still very anti. Catholics, for instance. There's absolutely zero chance, that's just the way it is.

**Female respondent:** Adventists are that way too. You can't go in as an Adventist. *(One respondent agreed.)*

**Female respondent:** For me it's the way, appearance. I used to dress very dark in high school. I wore all black, I had eyeliner. I didn't really do the hair.

**Female respondent:** Were you Goth?

**Female respondent:** I wouldn't classify myself as Goth by any means, but my color choice was always black. I figured everything looked good in black. Wearing black and wanting to pierce my ears a bunch of times, half of the Christians that I talked to thought that I was Satanic, which I think is absolutely retarded. Sorry, ridiculous, I'll go there.

**Female respondent:** Don't say the R word.

**Female respondent:** I know, we can't say the R word anymore. There's a study on it on the news. It's so ridiculous to be able to look at somebody and immediately peg who they are just by how they appear. When I would go to church with my friends, there would be women that would be pointing me out

going, “I think that girl’s having sex.” I maintained my V card until after I graduated high school. It’s ridiculous to say you have to look a certain way.

**(1:10:36.5) NO ONE’S BROUGHT UP ABORTION.**

**Female respondent:** Oh yes, that.

**(1:10:47.3) WE’RE FINDING THAT’S A BIG OBJECTION NATIONALLY.**

**Female respondent:** It goes along with permission to your own body and permission to do whatever you please, but the Protestants are like, “No, you have to go here, you have to study at this time. You have to be married to live with him.” I’m not too sure how the abortion part plays a part with the Protestants. I haven’t heard too much about that.

**Female respondent:** Pretty much the same as Catholics.

**Female respondent:** I know you have to be married to have a baby and all this. That’s always been put in my mind.

**Female respondent:** I think that they believe the life at conception, so that’s where the line gets blurry.

**(1:11:29.9) IT DOESN’T SEEM TO BE A BIG ISSUE FOR ALL OF YOU.**

**Female respondent:** It’s annoying to me. It really is, to be able to tell somebody how they’re supposed to do whatever they want with their body.

**Female respondent:** It intrigues me because there’s no biblical baseline for it. It’s never been an issue for me because I can’t trace it back to the Bible, and I think I know the Bible. I’ve read it probably fifty times in my life and I think I know it pretty well, unfortunately.

**Female respondent:** It’s like, “Where did that one come from?”

**Female respondent:** Yes. It’s an outspoken, vague . . .

**Female respondent:** It wasn’t an issue, then, in the Bible.

**Female respondent:** No, so why is it now? *(One respondent agreed.)*

**Female respondent:** I’ve been told that your body is for temporary until you pass away, then you go into heaven. Someone tells me it’s for temporary, then some other people are like, “Don’t damage it, don’t drink, don’t take birth control.”

**Female respondent:** Your body is a temple kind of thing?

**Female respondent:** Yes. They’re saying that and then again I’m getting, “It’s just temporary.”

**Female respondent:** It’s confusing. *(One respondent agreed.)*

**Female respondent:** That is, linguistically it is written in whatever book, I don't care, whatever version you look at, it is in there. Yes, I think it's become an X factor, meaning I think it was a set of rules that was formed, abortion was a topic that was formed in the latter part.

**Female respondent:** I think, too, it's people who are religious are saying it's murder. If you're good and righteous or whatever, then you don't kill something or beings or a life, basically.

**(1:13:11.9 - 1:14:32.0) MODERATOR SHARES INFORMATION ON EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS.**

**(1:14:32.1) WHO HERE WAS BORN AGAIN?**

**Female respondent:** That was my friend that said that she was born again and I was going to hell.

**(1:15:01.4) YOU WERE ELEVEN?**

**Female respondent:** Yes.

**(1:15:05.3) TO CHRISTIANS, BORN AGAIN MEANS SPIRITUAL BIRTH. WHAT DO YOU THINK WHEN SOMEONE TELLS YOU THIS IS ONE OF THEIR CORE BELIEFS?**

**Female respondent:** I don't have a problem with that theory of being born again, because when you're a week old you're not going to have any kind of spiritual . . .

**Female respondent:** Religious affiliation.

**Female respondent:** Yes. Your spiritual theories or philosophies even are going to be nonexistent. I have no problem with the theory of being born again.

**(1:16:00.8) BORN AGAIN MEANS YOUR SPIRITUAL PHILOSOPHY—**

**Female respondent:** Yes, by the pure definition I think that that makes sense.

**Female respondent:** I have a problem with that term "born again," but that's mostly just based on personal experiences of being told I was going to hell.

**(1:16:15.2) IF SHE HAD SAID YOU NEEDED TO BE DREADLOCKED OR YOU'RE GOING TO HELL . . .**

**Female respondent:** I would say, "I never want to talk about a dreadlocked Christian again." (1:16:24.5 *Unclear/crosstalk*) that experience. The concept is, I don't have a problem with it, but looking at this paper and seeing born again on here, immediately I was like, "I don't want to read that. I don't want it."

**Female respondent:** Sorry.

**Female respondent:** You're fine, go ahead.

**Female respondent:** I think the neatest part is that they term spirituality in there . . . Spirituality can be the thought or baseline of anything. I could be your thought of a rock, it could be your bond to any one

given concept. In fact, it's interesting to read this because my wife, we were talking about this. Spirituality is such a group of . . . it's your personal belief and value system all blended into one. That's a cool way to think of born again and totally something I've never seen before. Interesting.

**(1:17:19.6) WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT BORN AGAIN?**

**Leah:** It's fine, but I don't want to be told that I have to be born again.

**(1:17:26.2) WHEN YOU HEAR CONVERSION IS A KEY BELIEF FOR EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

**Leah:** If it works for them, that's fine. They don't need to label it; it could just be something that happens to them but they put a word to it. I don't know.

**(1:17:53.8) WHAT ARE THEY REALLY DOING?**

**Leah:** Controlling. They're making it a brand. I have a bumper sticker that says, "Born okay the first time." *(Laughter.)*

**(1:18:09.8) I HAVEN'T SEEN THAT ONE.**

**Leah:** I don't know. It's their beliefs.

**Desiree:** When they're born again, that's when they finally . . . I don't know how at eleven years old she could be born again when she's not old enough to, to use your example, or her friend, she's not old enough to know truly what path she's going down.

**(1:18:42.8) YOU'RE SO YOUNG.**

**Female respondent:** I just don't understand how you can develop that. *(One respondent agreed.)*

**Female respondent:** You can be born again into anything. It's like when you grow up and reality hits. It's that type of . . . When I think of born again in the religious sense, it's the reality and what they want to do with their Christianity, bringing to light where the path that they're going on maybe. That's what I think of when I hear it.

**Female respondent:** I'd be easier with a word like reaffirmed or something like that. *(Two respondents agreed.)* I'm choosing to have this religion as opposed to . . . something about the born again. My mother bore me, period. That word, born, to me is just . . .

**(1:19:31.5) WHAT ABOUT CONVERSION?**

**Female respondent:** I don't even think it's really . . . again, if I'm going to choose a religion it's not because I want to convert, it's because I found something that fits my belief system.

**Female respondent:** It'll be an enlightenment.

**Female respondent:** Yes, so for me those are harsh words.

**Lauren:** What they're doing actually is making a distinction. They're taking born again and they're making a distinction that separates them from the other Christian faiths. The definition of born again is someone that says they accepted Jesus into their hearts. That's something that is in many religions. Why does it have to have this distinction of born again if not to divide themselves from other people?

**Female respondent:** Seriously.

**Lauren:** When you make a distinction like that, the intent is to divide yourself, and when you divide yourself from somebody, there's going to be conflicts with the people you're dividing from.

**(1:20:24.9) IF THE TERM BORN AGAIN WEREN'T THERE AND IT WAS ONLY DESCRIBED AND CALLED CONVERSION, WOULD THAT CHANGE HOW YOU FEEL?**

**Lauren:** I think it mostly is just the born again distinction. If it said, "Evangelical Christians believe that . . ."

**Female respondent:** It could be a pledge and I'd be okay with it.

**Female respondent:** Yes, that believe their conversion and blah, blah, blah. Christians are saved or whatever. I think coining a term and stamping that onto the people that follow their faith is like branding them.

**Female respondent:** If it was any other word, then it would still have that stigma.

**Female respondent:** It would be the same.

**Female respondent:** Yes.

**Female respondent:** Yes, it's not the specific word.

**Female respondent:** Born again, yes, it's not the word, it's what goes along with the word. It's what we associate with the word. If it was conversion instead of born again, then we would associate conversion.

**(1:21:30.3) YOU WOULD ASSOCIATE WHAT WITH CONVERSION?**

**Female respondent:** Pushing religion, Christianity. Bats\*\*\* crazy.

**Female respondent:** Dramatic change came to mind for some reason. Dramatic change. As you were saying that, sorry.

**Female respondent:** No, that's fine.

**(1:21:51.0) ONE OF THE CORE BELIEFS IS THE BIBLE.**

**Female respondent:** Can't do it. I'm out. I'm all out. *(Laughter.)* The best I can give the Bible is the basic instructions before leaving earth. It's a good guideline put together by a room full of people like this that all had their own individual agenda in what got in. It's an interesting read, but for all intensive purposes it's fiction because even if it was the spoken word of God, a whole bunch of men sat in a room and decided what got to go inside the spine.

**Female respondent:** There's also little bits and pieces there that aren't the spoken word of God. There's, "Oh, and by the way, you should do this. Jesus said this, this, and this. By the way, if your kids misbehave you can stone them to death and that's totally fine." Little bits here and there, "Oh, by the way, also, you need to do this."

**Female respondent:** Instructional.

**Female respondent:** To regard something like that as the ultimate authority, I feel like it is fiction. It's something that you sit there and read and go, "Yes, that's kind of cool." Then you turn the page and you're like, "That's stupid."

#### **(1:23:00.7) YOU WERE SAYING?**

**Melissa:** I look at the Bible and I think twofold. I think it's perceptual. Everyone has a perception, so our experiences are going to heavily value, are going to make up of our perception. I could run in front of a car and somebody that has a child that's been hit by a car may freak out and it would be the worst day of their life. Me, I'm just running across the street. I don't even notice it. Life is all about perception and I don't think, no matter what time, place, or what's going on in life, perception is one's reality, and I struggle with following anyone's perception other than what I see, feel, touch, and taste.

#### **(1:23:41.9) HOW ABOUT YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE BIBLE AS A CORE BELIEF?**

**Herbena:** I can't do it. I can't accept it because the Bible doesn't pay me, it doesn't help my cost of living, it doesn't give me a direction. It just gives me a set of rules and obedience to go by. Something that was created very long ago.

#### **(1:24:14.8) AS SPIRITUAL PEOPLE, WHAT DOES PROVIDE THAT SET OF RULES OR STANDARDS FOR YOU?**

**Female respondent:** Value-based system?

**Female respondent:** I think personal morality.

#### **(1:24:47.2) THAT COMES FROM SOMEWHERE.**

**Female respondent:** Your heart? Your soul?

**Female respondent:** Your experiences, I guess.

**Female respondent:** Your parents. Yes, just because I don't have religion doesn't mean I'm going to steal.

**(1:24:59.0) WE KNOW THAT.**

**Female respondent:** Even that's perceptually based. It depends on your faith and belief. If I have to feed my children and I've asked for a job and I've worked and I've begged and I've done things, at some point I'm going to feed my kid stealing the apple. I don't think that every person's perception of Jesus is going to strike that person down as being a thief in that situation. It goes back to perception. I think the Jesus that I would like to believe in wants me to feed my kid whether I have to steal the apple or I got the opportunity to purchase it. It goes back to perception again.

**Female respondent:** In here it says the Bible and then it says, "Has the ultimate authority." To me that's saying that this is the authority, this is who's in charge. They're looking at the Bible as being in charge or the parent-type situation to the congregation or the children. I don't understand how the Bible is of authority when you are in charge of yourself, I guess. That bothers me. *(One respondent agreed.)*

**(1:26:23.9) WHAT ISN'T GOOD ABOUT IT BEING THE AUTHORITY?**

**Female respondent:** The contradiction, we're supposed to have free will. *(One respondent agreed.)*

**Female Respondent:** The Bible as the ultimate authority, it's not . . .

**Female respondent:** It's blasphemous.

**Female respondent:** Yes, how can this be to tell you what's right and wrong? When you have moral beliefs. I know the way I was raised, not even the way I was raised because I can't even say that that's what track I went off of as an adult because we don't always follow that core or that base that we have growing up. The same thing with the religion, they're saying that this is the authority, this is the one in charge. How can that be, when ultimately it's my decision and I'm in charge of my own self, my own choices? That whole, the Bible and the ultimate authority together combo . . .

**(1:27:33.2) THERE ARE OTHER THINGS THAT REPRESENT ULTIMATE AUTHORITY TO YOU, CORRECT?**

**Female respondent:** Your conscience is important.

**(1:27:40.6) THAT'S INTERNAL, BUT THERE ARE EXTERNAL THINGS TOO. THIS EXTERNAL THING DOESN'T SIT AS WELL WITH YOU?**

**Female respondent:** It's just an instruction; it's not an ultimate authority, though. The ultimate authority would be the judge that sentences you for what wrong you did.

**Female respondent:** There's a tangible capacity there. You drink and drive, you get a DUI, you're going to go to tent city for however long. If you don't follow this Bible, there's this loose theory that fits of, "You're going to go to hell." Do you really know that? You haven't died yet, you can't tell me. There's

that content going back to the very first topic we had, there's something tangible with the hard law. If I shoot you I'm going to go to prison.

**(1:28:33.2) YOU KNOW THAT.**

**Female respondent:** I know that for a fact. It is what it is, but with the Bible being the ultimate authority and breaking those rules, it's much more fluid. I think you said it best with one's perception is their reality.

**(1:28:54.5) WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT ACTION AND ONE OF THEIR CORE BELIEFS?**

**Female respondent:** Uh-uh. *(Negative)*

**Female respondent:** Someone once told me faith without works is dead. Boy, I've got to tell you, I wish someone never said that to me, because it's been in my life forever. Faith without works is dead. I've got to get rid of the Jesus part because ultimately that's cool. No matter, whatever it is that's going to drive you to put your best foot forward, make the best choice, help others, that's cool and all. To tell others about Jesus, maybe they don't want to hear. Maybe everyone doesn't really want to hear about it.

**(1:29:44.3) YOU WERE A JW.**

**Female respondent:** Yes, and like I said, I wish it was never told. *(Laughter.)* You know what I mean? All those years of knocking on people's doors.

**Female respondent:** *Awake! Magazines.*

**Female respondent:** Yes. I've got to tell you, when someone hands me an *Awake! Magazine*, I've got to tell you, I still read it. I still read it because I'm real curious about the trends of the world and other people's views. Really, do not knock on my door while I am watching *The Voice*. I am really not going to be pleased. That is my show, get off my patio.

**Female respondent:** I really struggle because I feel like it's force fed. I feel like you force feed people in this world. That's where the people get turned off with religion. *(One respondent agreed.)* If you want to talk about spirituality, let's have a glass of wine, let's sit around, let's have a nice dinner, and let's talk about spirituality and the greater gifts of life. Really, if you want to shove your views down with restraints and constriction or restriction, rather, I don't know if I want to talk about that.

**(1:30:48.8) THIS FEELS LIKE THAT?**

**Female respondent:** It's very restrictive. Very.

**Female respondent:** I think that also a certain level of understanding of other people plays a part. No one wants to hear somebody else's views, so how would Evangelical Christians feel of an atheist coming and knocking on their door and telling them, "Hey, by the way, you're wrong and I'm going to tell you

why you're wrong and I am going to save you right now by getting you to not believe in what you believe in"?

**(1:31:16.8) THAT'S AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT?**

**Female respondent:** I'm trying to *(1:31:21.6 Unclear/mumbling)*.

**Female respondent:** Contradiction, I guess?

**Female respondent:** Hypocrisy. *(One respondent agreed.)*

**Female respondent:** Pushing the opinion.

**(1:31:31.2) THERE ARE A COUPLE OF THEM UP THERE.**

**Female respondent:** Yes. *(Two respondents agreed.)*

**Female respondent:** You know what's crazy that when you said that I thought of? What would you do if a magician came to your door and said, "I can give you a potion that if you read this ten times a night you will be wealthy tomorrow. I'm going to give you this potion and I want you to take this and I want you to do this and I promise you that if you do that you will be wealthy." Really? No one wants to hear that. That sounds great, but I still have to go to work in the morning.

**Female respondent:** It does, but that would sound a little bit better than the magician coming in and telling you, "By the way, everything you've been doing up until this point, completely wrong." *(One respondent agreed.)* "You are wrong, you suck as a person. Here, let me fix that." That doesn't sit well with anybody, ever.

**Female respondent:** I'd probably drink that potion. *(Laughter.)* I'd at least try it.

**(1:32:21.9) WHY NOT?**

**Female respondent:** I've had people, Witnesses and Mormons are the best at this when they come to my door. As a gay family, we have three adopted kids. Really, we've got a whole tribe. Come in and tell me I've been wrong, because all three of my kids were adopted out of Mormon homes. All three. Shut up. When Mormons come to my house I love it. I love it.

**Female respondent:** You shouldn't play with them like that.

**Female respondent:** I listen, I listen to them, but then I ask them why I have their children in my life and why they're unable to care for them, because they're known for taking care of their own, and I have three.

**Female respondent:** She's cat and mousing.

**Female respondent:** I'm sorry, I'll still have a glass of wine with her.

**Female respondent:** I want to *(1:33:02.3 unclear/crosstalk)*.

**(1:33:06.3) THEY ALSO BELIEVE JESUS' SACRIFICE ON THE CROSS MAKES POSSIBLE THE REDEMPTION OF HUMANITY.**

**Female respondent:** What's the term "a redemption"?

**(1:33:14.8) WHAT IS A REDEMPTION? WHAT ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT?**

**Female respondent:** Forgiveness? I don't know.

**Female respondent:** Being worthy.

**Female respondent:** What is it? What is it and also why? Why do I need to be redeemed? What did my ancestors do far, far back in the past that I have to be redeemed for now? You don't choose to be born. No one chooses to be born. They're just here and they come here, so you're telling me I have to be . . . Why? Why do I have to be redeemed?

**Female respondent:** Why does it have to be a cross?

**Female respondent:** That's morbid, in my opinion. I've always found that to be very morbid.

**Female respondent:** Why can't it be an angel? I'd be down with that.

**Female respondent:** Or a dove, or something more symbolic and more from a happier time. Even a picture of Jesus. His face would be better, but every time you go to church you sit down and you look at the bloody Jesus on the cross.

**Female respondent:** It's a *(1:34:17.2 Unclear/crosstalk/laughter)*.

**Female respondent:** You're like, "Why am I sitting here in front of him at probably the worst time"?

**(1:34:25.9) IS THAT PART OF THE REDEMPTION?**

**Female respondent:** Certainly that's what we're told.

**(1:34:31.4) THE SACRIFICE?**

**Female respondent:** Yes. Me personally, if I was murdered and strung up on a cross, I wouldn't want to have this statue of that put into every establishment.

**(1:34:45.1) SOMEONE GIVE ME A DIFFERENT PERCEPTION.**

**Female respondent:** It's a reminder to all of his followers that he died for their sins.

**Female respondent:** If you read the book, it says that you're not supposed to pray to any statues or deities or objects of any kind. It's a complete contradiction of every book today.

**Female respondent:** Any materialization of worship of an object.

**Female respondent:** It's supposed to be internal. Again, if you're going to follow the book and read the book, you can't do the actions without going against the book. *(Two respondents agreed.)*

**(1:35:21.6) GIVE ME A DIFFERENT STORY.**

**Desiree:** It is what she said, that's what their belief of his worst times were. They want to remember that symbolic . . . they're not supposed to pray on anything, or not pray but . . .

**Female respondent:** Worship?

**Desiree:** Worship.

**(1:35:48.3) WORSHIP ANY FALSE IDOLS.**

**Desiree:** They do because we have to have something visual.

**Female respondent:** Structure.

**Desiree:** They want to see something visual to know it's still there, so those are reminders of what happened and what he did. To me, that's what I believe when I see it. They have to have that reminder. They can't hold their faith on their own in some ways without that visual aspect of it.

**(1:36:24.4) JEWISH PEOPLE ALSO HAVE A SYMBOL, CORRECT?**

**Female respondent:** Mm-hmm. *(Affirmative)*

**Female respondent:** Maybe it's like a wedding ring.

**(1:36:30.7) IT'S A SYMBOL.**

**Female respondent:** Yes, maybe it's just—

**(1:36:33.1) COULD IT BE A SYMBOL?**

**Female respondent:** Yes. I never thought about it that way.

**(1:36:36.7) IS A WEDDING RING A SYMBOL TO YOU?**

**Female respondent:** I don't know, I just put it on every day. I've been married a long time. I don't think about it.

**Female respondent:** You're projecting *(1:36:44.2 unclear/laughter)*.

**Female respondent:** I don't think about it anymore? *(Laughter.)* I don't know, I don't think about it anymore.

**Female respondent:** You're projecting out into the world, too. If you're wearing a cross, you're saying, "Hey, I'm a Christian."

**Female respondent:** You're a Christian.

**Female respondent:** That's I guess why I wear a wedding ring. All right, there you go, boom.

**Female respondent:** I'm married.

**Female respondent:** Done.

**Female respondent:** That's why I put it on every day. It has nothing to do with me, it's just so they'll leave me alone. That's what it is.

**Female respondent:** (1:37:02.3 Unclear/crosstalk).

**Female respondent:** It's just a reminder of her because that person's at home type thing. It's the same thing. I wear this cross because it reminds me of my faith, type thing. I would assume.

**Female respondent:** It reminds you that you're married.

**Female respondent:** Doesn't it, though?

**Female respondent:** (1:37:23.8 Unclear/crosstalk) that, you're married.

**Female respondent:** Don't Catholics, there's another symbol, though, with the cross for Catholics. It's a much more sacred . . .

**(1:37:33.5) I DON'T KNOW.**

**Female respondent:** I don't either, do you?

**Female respondent:** Are you talking about the little picture of the Virgin Mary?

**Female respondent:** No.

**Female respondent:** The sacred heart or the devil?

**Female respondent:** Yes, I was thinking about the rosary. There's something that's strong—I have no Catholic baseline. That was off limits as a child.

**Female respondent:** Or is it the mother and child?

**Female respondent:** No, I was thinking there's a . . . I believe, to my understanding, they believe that it has power to take away from or to take the evil out in some ways, the rosary?

**Female respondent:** Yes, the rosary, it also is a part of the redemption process. You say this, there's little beads, breakers, in between X amount of beads, and so one strand or one section of the strand is

the Hail Mary and the other section is the Lord's Prayer, and so on and so forth. Depending on what the priest tells you at confession, the severity of your crime, so to speak. You have to say X amount of the rosaries or X amount of the Hail Mary section of the rosary depending on what you've done and that will—

**(1:38:36.6) THE ROSARY HAS A CROSS ON IT.**

**Female respondent:** It does at the very end. If you do this, then whatever X crime is, you're good. You're good to go.

**(1:38:49.2) COMING BACK TO EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS, AFTER LEARNING THEIR CORE BELIEFS, WHAT IS YOUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS? WHAT HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED WITH THEM?**

**Female respondent:** I guess all I've ever known them as has been born-again Christians. Evangelical is a term that I recently, not recently, but within the last seven, eight years of my life, gained a knowledge of. Evangelical Christian doesn't really have any more meaning to me than nondenominational Christian. I don't know what the distinction is and why there has to really be one.

**Female respondent:** Not to be stereotypical, but for me it's the hand clapping, feet stomping, speaking in tongues kind of . . .

**Female respondent:** Yes, that freaked me out the first time I saw that.

**Female respondent:** Yes, it's that crew.

**(1:40:31.2) THAT CREW.**

**Female respondent:** I don't mean it that *(1:40:32.7 unclear/crosstalk)*.

**Female respondent:** *(1:40:32.7 Unclear/crosstalk)*.

**Female respondent:** I don't mean that from a racial perspective at all. *(1:40:37.7 Unclear/crosstalk)*.

**Female respondent:** I was saying, it's very Tammy Faye Bakker.

**Female respondent:** What was his name? Jimmy, what was it?

**Female respondent:** Bakker.

**Female respondent:** Bakker.

**Female respondent:** Jimmy, it was? Yes, that was interesting.

**Female respondent:** Very on TV, very call in donations. *(Two respondents agreed.)* I don't know, they come across, they think they're better than others.

**Female respondent:** That was in the South a lot. That had to have been an interesting conversation in the South. *(One respondent agreed.)* That had to be real interesting.

**(1:41:11.3) I SPARED YOU. WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS?**

**Female respondent:** They're the crazier of the Christianity sects. The whole born-again thing and like you said, the singing *(1:41:47.6 unclear/crosstalk)*.

**(1:41:47.6) ARE THEY MORE DEVOUT?**

**Female respondent:** Intense.

**Female respondent:** Visual.

**Female respondent:** More intense. *(Two respondents agreed.)* Yes, definitely.

**(1:41:59.1) WHAT ELSE?**

**Female respondent:** I don't know. I've never known an Evangelical Christian person personally, so I've never had that in my life.

**(1:42:08.9) WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INFORMATION FROM THEN?**

**Female respondent:** Probably other people and TV and movies, things like that.

**(1:42:22.5) THROW OUT SOME MOVIE NAMES.**

**Female respondent:** For religion based?

**(1:42:27.8) WHERE YOU'VE GOTTEN A FEEL FOR EVANGELICALS.**

**Female respondent:** *(1:42:33.2 Unclear/crosstalk/laughter)*.

**Female respondent:** Yes, and I've watched all the exorcise the demons and stuff like that. I've watched all those movies.

**Female respondent:** Those movies scare me.

**(1:42:50.4) YOU MEAN *THE EXORCIST*?**

**Female respondent:** Yes.

**Female respondent:** Those are Catholics.

**Female respondent:** *Exorcism of Emily Rose*.

**Female respondent:** Great film.

**Female respondent:** I don't know, I can't think of any.

**(1:43:01.2) IF IT'S THERE I WANT TO KNOW. SOMEONE ELSE?**

**Female respondent:** I think they're very boisterous. They're very out there about their beliefs. They put their opinions on others a lot. When I think of them, I think I need to hide.

**Female respondent:** I should hide.

**Female respondent:** I have a friend. Not even a friend, a coworker. I've worked with so many different people in what I do. I've had clients, they've come in, and the born-again Christians, you're here asking for benefits, let me help you. That's what I do, let me help you get this taken care of, yet they want to not worry about right now what we're doing. They want to tell me about Jesus and about their beliefs, thinking they need to save me when they're here asking for assistance. Just let me get it done, type thing. A lot of coming forward with almost the pressure for us to take the time to listen to them. It is a lot. When I think of that, that's what I see, is that whole pressure of trying to be the nice person and listen. Their beliefs, they push their beliefs on you a lot.

**(1:44:20.2) WHAT'S BEEN YOUR EXPERIENCE?**

**Leah:** They make their religion a big part of their life, and they're very passionate and dedicated to it.

**(1:44:32.1) IS THAT GOOD OR BAD?**

**Leah:** My opinion, I don't think it's a good thing because then they push their opinion on others who don't necessarily want it.

**(1:44:42.7) IT'S MORE THE ACTION PART THAT BOTHERS YOU.**

**Leah:** Yes. I've had experience with, my friend's mom is . . . you can really call her that. That's the only person I really know who is, but I can say, yes, she's really like that. That's okay.

**(1:45:09.5) WHAT DOES SHE SAY WHEN YOU SEE HER? DOES SHE SAY HI?**

**Leah:** Yes, she doesn't see my car with all my bumper stickers that have very opinionated things on them. They think they're doing what they believe in, so they're allowed that, just not forced upon . . . It seems really extreme compared to other Christians.

**Female respondent:** It would be hard to be friends with them without being very accepting of their religion. In general, most people I'm friends with I couldn't even tell you what their religion is as a general . . .

**Female respondent:** You can usually tell with them.

**Female respondent:** With that person it's going to be very right in front of your face.

**Female respondent:** You'll know.

**Jessica:** My husband would say, my best friend's gay. He's a male. My husband is a type A man, so when my best friend was younger he was very vocal about his weekends out and my husband would be like, "It's inappropriate. I don't walk around going, 'This is what I did to my wife this weekend.'" It would be equally inappropriate. I don't in general . . . We did it today in an introduction for the setting, but I wouldn't walk up to somebody and say, "Hi, my name is Jessica and I'm a practicing Catholic," for any reason whatsoever. (*One respondent agreed.*) The people, it's going to emanate from their person where somebody might know me for five years before they have any idea what my spirituality is.

**Female respondent:** It's very intimate.

**Jessica:** Yes.

**Female respondent:** It's personal.

#### **(1:46:32.9) THEY USE THAT AS A DEFINITION OF THEMSELVES.**

**Female respondent:** Yes. (*One respondent agreed.*) That's something that I find a hard time getting along with. I want to get to know the person and not what you learned.

#### **(1:46:47.2) EXPERIENCES?**

**Female respondent:** I perceive them as fake but very positive attitudes. They're very outgoing and you can develop a friendship with them, but once they know they have your trust they start to bring in their religion about God or Jesus, about the Bible. I can listen, but I seem to tune out because they're very close minded. I feel like they're close minded and they don't know what else is out there.

#### **(1:47:24.0) WHY ARE THEY CLOSE MINDED?**

**Female respondent:** They treat it like a job. They go over there, walk out of their religion, and then sit down, drink a soda, and cuss or something.

#### **(1:47:34.1) WHY DON'T THEY KNOW WHAT'S OUT THERE?**

**Female respondent:** They go to there, come back home.

#### **(1:47:39.2) IT'S WRAPPED TIGHT AROUND THEM.**

**Female respondent:** Mm-hmm. (*Affirmative.*)

#### **(1:47:42.7) WHAT QUESTION OR TOPIC DID WE NOT DISCUSS THAT YOU THOUGHT WE WOULD?**

**Female respondent:** Is there a heaven? That was part of the qualifying questions.

**Female respondent:** I honestly thought we were going to discuss more religions on a broader spectrum and not just focus on Christianity. I was excited to share my opinions on all of them.

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**(1:48:15.0) I’M GLAD YOU SHARED YOUR OPINIONS ON THIS. YOUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT OTHER FAITHS INFORMS YOUR KNOWLEDGE ON THIS.**

**Female respondent:** It builds a tolerance. It builds a tolerance and an openness between people when you can at least accept the information, even if you don’t accept it as a truth. *(Two respondents agreed.)*

**(1:48:45.8) DO EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS BELIEVE THERE IS A HEAVEN?**

**Female respondent:** Yes.

**Female respondent:** I’m going to say that’s their end line. That’s what they’re in it for.

**Female respondent:** They told me I was going to hell, so they must.

**(1:48:57.2) ANY OTHER COMMENTS OR THOUGHTS?**

**Female respondent:** This was fun. I had fun.

**(1:49:19.3) THIS WAS GREAT, I USUALLY DO ENERGY FOCUS GROUPS. THANK YOU.**

**THANK YOU . . .**