

Bet Your Life

It was late one night and we happened to meet at the Coke machine in the hospital. We struck up a conversation as we sipped our soft drinks and walked down the hall. The young physician had become a good friend of mine and I appreciated his extraordinary clinical skills and intense loyalty to his patients and the hospital. "I just purchased another life insurance policy this afternoon," he informed me as we headed towards the Doctor's Lounge.

"Why did you do that?" I inquired.

"I have a strong sense that I'm going to die before I'm 40 years old," he replied, "and I want my family to be financially secure."

I told him I thought he was full of nonsense but knowing of his Muslim faith, I pursued the subject. "What do you think will happen to you when you die?"

He paused for a moment. "Well, I suppose I'll go to Hell," he answered.

"Now, why would you say that?" I was really inquisitive now.

"I think it's a good idea for everyone to go to Hell after they die, because they'll have a stronger appreciation for Heaven once they arrive there."

I was incredulous. "Where did you come up with that theology?"

"It's in the Koran," he insisted. "Everyone goes to Hell for a while and then, if you've been a good person and obeyed all the laws, you get to go to Heaven."

"You've got to be kidding!" I exclaimed. "Are you sure that's what it says in the Koran?"

"I'm pretty sure," he continued, "The Koran is the same as your Bible."

"No, it's not!" I argued. "My Bible doesn't say anything like that. My Bible says that once you die your destination is final. It's either Heaven or Hell and there's no highway in between."

We paused in the hallway and I continued. "Doctor, you are perhaps the smartest man I know. Your training is superb and you're a walking encyclopedia of medical knowledge. You have a photographic memory and you devour every medical journal that crosses your desk. As intelligent as you are, why would you

bet your eternal destiny on a theology of which you are not totally certain?"

"Have you ever read the Koran, Dwight?" he asked. I admitted that I had only read a few scattered portions.

"Have you ever read the Bible?" I asked in return. He admitted that he hadn't.

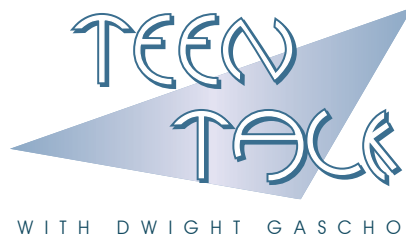
"I'll make a deal with you," I suggested. "I'll get you a copy of the Bible to read and you get me a copy of the Koran. We'll both do some reading and then we'll continue our discussion."

Our hospital is filled with various belief systems. The Islamic and Hindu faiths are represented as well as Christian Science, Catholicism and a wide variety of Protestantism. We have one thing in common.

We all believe our own theologies are correct. We're betting our lives on it. We even have a number of employees who have bet their lives on a belief that religion is irrelevant.

There was a time when I took my own beliefs for granted. I had simply assumed mine were correct and everyone else was either totally wrong or at least slightly off target. Since then I've done more studying. I've tried to understand the faith systems of my international friends, and I've learned more about Catholics and other Protestant denominations. I've narrowed my personal belief system to one major premise. Either Jesus is who he said he is, or he isn't. It is the basis of everything I believe.

The decision to accept or reject the claims of Christ is the most important decision one can ever make. I've chosen to believe that the Bible is the absolute inspired word of God and I believe that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. I believe that no one comes to the Father except through him. I believe it's the only way and there is no other. It may seem exclusive and narrow, but it's the truth. I'm betting my life on it. **BB**



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