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Misconceptions of Christianity

“Your religion is a lie.” While this might seem like a bold statement to make, stereotypes just like it, about my religion are often said to me, especially by friends and family members. I have seen many judgements from outsiders when it comes to my religion. “You are too religious, for something that does not even exist” “Christians just force religion onto people.” “You guys have to follow such strict guidelines; I could never do that.” “You are wasting your time praying, praying does not even solve anything.” These are all things I have been told when I have brought up my religion to people. In general, these comments are not even a close truth when it comes to Christianity, while I may seem too religious, my religion is something I am very passionate about and whether you believe in Christianity or not, I believe in God’s existence. Along with that, while I do like sharing my beliefs I have never and will never force someone to believe the same things I do. In addition, with my Christianity there are not super strict guidelines, the rules I follow just help me remember to live for a greater power than myself. Furthermore, while I understand where people come from when they do not realize the importance of praying, it is actually something that has helped me through a lot of tough times in my life. Overall, my Christianity has shaped my life, and I truly would not be the person I am today without it.

While I do see some of people’s points when they call people “too religious” because of odd religious practices that they do, I do not believe that they should stereotype all religious people because of it. Along with that, despite what outsiders may think, that Christians are too

religious, and wasting their time on something that does not even exist, we are just regular people that believe in something bigger than this world. When I was in sixth grade, I was sitting at the lunch table with some of my friends. I was eating my peanut butter sandwich while having some casual conversation when religion was brought up. I started telling them how excited I was to go to Wednesday night youth group later that day. I continued by talking about how my church friends are like family to me. We sat at the lunch table and kept talking about our churches and our faiths for a few minutes when one of my friends who was sitting there quietly during the conversation said, "God is not real; you are just wasting your time on your religion." This statement is something that I think about quite often. My religion is something that has always had a strong presence in my life, and while I have been called "too religious" and been told that I am wasting my time believing in something that is not real, it will never change the fact that I am a Christian. My religion has shaped me to be the person I am today and has gotten me through so many tough times, so this comment from my friend left me confused. For me and a lot of other Christians, the more time we spend with God the fuller our life feels so while my friend and other people might say that "I am wasting my time on something that does not exist" or that "I am too religious" my religion is such a meaningful part of my life and I would not change a thing about it.

In addition, another stereotype about religious people is that they try to force other people to join their religion, while that is not true for most religious people, we do just enjoy talking about and sharing our beliefs. On a lot of social media platforms, I see people judging Christians off the stereotype that they force religion on people. The stereotypes say things like, "Christians are overly judgmental of people who are not religious, and they try to push their religion on people." While that is not true for all Christians, it is something many people who are not religious believe. The stereotypes on social media put a spotlight on the few Christians that act in

those ways. My faith causes me to be more aware of my behaviors every day and to act kindly towards everyone. While I do enjoy telling people about my faith and the impacts it has had on my life, I would never force someone to have the same beliefs as me.

The belief that Christianity has “absurdly strict” and “too many” guidelines to follow is something that seems to pull people away from wanting to be a Christian, while we do have some guidelines we follow, none of them are absurdly strict. Since my faith is something I talk about quite often, I get asked many questions when it comes to my religion. I was having a conversation over the phone one night with one of my friends who was not very religious but wanted to get more into her religion. She told me one of her worries with getting more involved with the church was having to follow a bunch of rules and she feared of what would happen if she accidentally did not follow one of the rules. I explained to her that in my church the only guidelines we strictly follow are the ten commandments. She was at first confused because she had heard that there were many guidelines that Christians must follow to go to church. This stereotype is one of the most popular stereotypes outsiders seem to judge Christians off. While it is not true, without further education this stereotype pulls people away from Christianity and causes a lot of judgement from people who are not religious.

I understand how from an outside look, praying might look like a waste of time, but praying has helped me get through a lot of tough times. A few months ago, I realized that people view me as someone who is always happy and always has everything figured out. While that may not always be true, the time I spend with God helps me feel like I have everything in my life under control. I have been asked by many people how I “always seem to have my life together” but when I tell them that when I feel under stress or any sense of sadness I just pray about it and it seems to start to go away, they always seem to be in disbelief. An example of this is when my friend was going through a loss in their family, they asked me how I deal with grief, and I told

them that I pray about it, and it always seems to get better. At first, they thought it was really odd to pray and just expect things to get solved but they tried it, and they told me that they felt a lot less alone in their grief. From an outsider perspective it may look like Christians are talking to someone who is imaginary and will not respond but I have been so moved by prayer in my life and without trying to pray a few times you might not understand how much it can help you get through things you are struggling with. So, as a Christian we might pray a lot, but it will never be seen as a waste of time.

Many people assume a lot of negative things about Christians because of stereotypes, like that we are too religious, we force people into our religion, we have strict guidelines, and that we waste our time praying. While these misconceptions may be easy to believe from an outsider standpoint, Christians are just normal people who believe in something beyond this world. While writing this essay I have grown my understanding on why people believe these stereotypes about Christians, but I have also realized that if you look more beyond the surface of it, all the stereotypes will easily be seen as just misconceptions. My religion has helped me grow as a person, leading me to find a family within my church and causing me to generally be a happier person. I have gotten to meet so many people that have not only led to lifelong friendships but have brought me closer to God. So, no my religion is not a lie but the stereotypes you see about it might be.