

- Example: "I know what love (or freedom, or justice) is better than Jesus, and I will judge him according to that."

## The Killer Accusation against Christians

Luke 23:34; John 15:18-20

What the Roman historian Tacitus (56 – 118 AD) taught us about early Christians

Let's think about love... Was Jesus a loving person?

- Of course he was! Consider:
  1. His concern the poor (Luke 6:20-23), "sinners" (Luke 5:31-32), the "harassed" (Matt 9:36), children (Matt 19:14), women (John 4:27, Luke 8:1-3), etc.
  2. His forgiveness (Luke 23:34, 7:36-50, etc.
  3. Special acts: Foot washing (John 13:1-20), and of course his willing death for sinners! (Matt 10:44-45, John 10:11)
- But have you thought or heard it suggested that he could have been more loving?
  - Consider these examples...

Four perspectives on the accusation that Christians are \_\_\_\_\_.

1. Historical
  - Back to Tacitus: Christians are "haters of humanity"
  - Other examples
2. Cultural
  - Values such as love, justice, freedom—they differ from culture to culture, and they will change tomorrow!
3. Theological
  - Our doctrine of sin means the accusation \_\_\_\_\_
    - But Jesus' warnings about persecution mean the accusation is often \_\_\_\_\_. (John 15:18-20)
  - Sophisticated idolatry today: people don't create gods of wood and stone, but of their ideas and values.

### 4. Practical

1. We need discernment: is the accusation true?
2. Can we improve upon Jesus? Can we be more loving than him?
3. The importance of our spiritual connection and devotion to Christ as our Lord and Savior

### Questions for Further Reflection and Application

1. Consider Tacitus' accusation against Christians. How true is this accusation today about American Christians?
  - a. And how did you arrive at this conclusion? Reflect upon whether you're speaking from personal experience, or what you hear everyone saying, or what you read in your news sources or social media...
  - b. How you evaluate the truth of Tacitus' accusation has deep practical implications for you. List the ways this practically affects you, your faith, and your behavior.
2. Do Jesus' many warnings about opposition and persecution affect you? (e.g. John 15:18-20) How so?
  - a. And should we respond to our persecutors and enemies, according to Jesus?
3. Read the verses above on examples of Jesus' love.
  - a. But have you ever read the Gospels and thought Jesus could be more loving? How should you handle that thought in a thoughtful and spiritual manner?