



engaging

WORLD RELIGIONS



e

an 'essential' study by *Lee Boswell*

C O N T E N T S



Session 1: Introduction to World Religions

- What is Religion
- What are 'world religions'
- The Challenge of Many Faiths
- Why Religious Pluralism Doesn't Work
- Differences Matter



Session 2: The Exclusive Claims of Christianity

- What are the Differences that Matter?
- What is the Gospel?



Session 3: Engaging World Religions

- Challenges
- Considerations



Session 4: Engaging Eastern Religions

- History, Beliefs, Engaging



Session 5: Engaging Islam

- History, Beliefs, Engaging



Session 6: Engaging Judaism

- History, Beliefs, Engaging



Session 7: Engaging Atheism

- History, Beliefs, Engaging

ENGAGING WORLD RELIGIONS



Session 1: Introduction to World Religions

• Objectives:

- What this course hopes to accomplish
 - Develop a clearer idea of how diverse worldviews can be as a result of the various faiths people follow
 - Address the cultural view of religious pluralism and see why it is not a valid option
 - Gain a better understanding the exclusive claims of the Bible
 - Every major doctrine of Christianity differs from that of other world religions
 - Jesus is the Only way of Salvation and is the central part of the Christian faith
 - Gain a better understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and how to confidently share it with others
 - Learn about various religious faiths in order to recognize the differences between them and Christianity:
 - Hinduism
 - Buddhism
 - Other Eastern Religions
 - Islam
 - Judaism
 - Atheism/Agnosticism
 - Develop an understanding of how to connect or engage with people of different faiths
- What this course is not:
 - An in-depth study of the history and beliefs of other world religions
 - A complete study on evangelism (sharing your faith)

- **What is Religion?**

- A characteristic of the human species stretching:
 - From antiquity to the present
 - From simple societies to the most complex
 - From the unlearned to the educated
 - From the weak to the powerful
 - From the young to the old



A **religion** is a set of beliefs and practices, often centered upon specific supernatural and moral claims about reality, the cosmos, and human nature, and often codified as prayer, ritual, or religious law. Religion also encompasses ancestral or cultural traditions, writings, history, and mythology, as well as personal faith and religious experience. The term “religion” refers to both the personal practices related to communal faith and to group rituals and communication stemming from shared conviction.

- When examining the various major world religions there are common elements that all share:
 - The belief in a God or gods?
 - An awareness of the “other” - something or someone beyond ourselves?
 - Answer the question about where we came from?
 - Providing a purpose for our life?
 - Provide a moral code for living
 - Answer the question of whether there is something after death.
- These elements can be grouped into 2 primary categories:
 - Moral issues that relate to how one should live
 - Issues that speak to a higher being and whether we are accountable to something or someone bigger than ourselves.

- What are “world religions”?

- Any religion that accounts for a major percentage of adherents and/or major influence upon the world:
 - The **number of people** following the religion
 - The **amount of influence** a religion has had on human nature or history
- 4 religions account for more than the majority of religious adherents—over 60% of the world’s population:
 - 2 Western Religions:
 - Christianity (1.9 billion followers)
 - Islam (1.2 billion followers)
 - 2 Eastern Religions:
 - Hinduism (900 million followers)
 - Buddhism (400 million followers)
- Additionally, other religions are considered major because of their influence in history and world affairs
 - Judaism (14 million)
 - Atheism/Agnosticism: The belief in no god is still a religion as it tries to answer the questions of where we came from, what is our purpose in life, how should we live, and what happens after death are viewed in light of no ultimate authority.



- A note on the origins of other religions:

Some religions are formed out of other religions .

- Diverge: Some religions have their origin in other faiths
 - Jainism is a response to Hinduism
- Merge: Some religions are the result of an attempt to merge multiple faiths
 - Sikhism seeks to merge beliefs of Islam and Hinduism
- Group: Some religions are grouped together based upon similar features and belief set.



- African animism religions are generally grouped together, and may even included native American faiths that share traits with African religions
- Religions fall into one of three worldviews
 - Every religion has views concerning the basic questions/ issues listed above and each religion will answer those questions based upon their ideology, their doctrine. And their doctrine comes from some source of authority that has guided their beliefs.
 - A worldview is a collection of beliefs, convictions, and values that are applied to every area of life.
 - It is like a lens through which affects our way of thinking as it relates to the world around us.
 - Norman Geisler refers to a worldview as:



“an intellectual lens through which we see the world. If someone looks through a red-colored lens, the world looks red to him. If another individual looks through a blue-colored lens, the world will look blue to him.”
 (Unshakable Foundations, Geisler and Bocchino, p19-20).

- Geisler’s definition indicate that:
 - Our worldview is based on our underlying beliefs
 - Our worldview encompasses every area of our life

• 3 Religious Worldviews:

Religions can be grouped into one of three worldviews based upon their view of god.

- Theism: God made all



- God is outside/separate from creation
- Therefore we are accountable to this creator
- This would include both monotheistic and polytheistic religions

- Monotheism:
 - belief in one god
 - Sees God as the creator and sustainer of all things.
 - He interacts with creation numerous ways and reveals Himself to us through reason, nature, morality, etc.
 - Three Religions are monotheistic:
 - Islam
 - Judaism
 - Christianity
- Polytheism:
 - belief in many gods
 - gods either came from nature or were at one time men and women who became gods.
 - Gods are finite and contingent.
 - Similar to Pantheism in that:
 - The universe has always existed.
 - All things come from the universe, even Gods.
 - Examples of polytheistic religions:
 - Hinduism
 - Buddhism
- Pantheism: God is all



- God is the same as creation. There is one force in the universe and everything is made up of or part of this force
- God and nature are the same thing
- Pantheists would say that all is God
- There is no good or evil, no right or wrong and no true or false.
- When we die, we are all taken back into the impersonal whole.

- Everyone shares the same fate, Adolph Hitler and Mother Teresa.
- We are all part of God, and God is unchanging.
- No accountability
- Atheism/Agnosticism: No God at all



- The universe came about without the aid of a creator.
 - All that exists is the physical universe
 - There is no ultimate authority guiding us
- The Challenge with so many faiths
 - The question that must be answered regarding these faiths is the question of **TRUTH**
 - Is it possible for all religions to be true?
 - What amount of truth must exist within a belief system in order for it to be trustworthy?
 - Can't all religions contain some truth making them all valid?
 - How true does something have to be? Can something be true 'enough'?
 - Rules of Mathematics do not allow for partial truth
 - $5+5 = 10$.
 - One cannot say that $5+5= 12$ is just as true as 10
 - Rules of Science do not allow for partial truth
 - The universe follows laws that completely breakdown if they are off in the slightest measure
 - These laws never change
 - Truth is a Standard
 - Truth is anything that conforms to fact or reality.
 - Another way of defining truth is to say that truth is the measurement or ruler for determining what is right.
 - It is the standard for what is morally right and according to Scripture, God is the standard.

- Truth does Not Change

- What was right yesterday is right today. What was wrong three hundred years ago is wrong today.
- One of God's divine attributes is His unchanging nature. He never changes and that includes His view of sin. What He declares as unholy, improper, and sinful is always wrong because His view of morality never changes.

- Psalm 119:89

"Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven."

- Illustrations of Absolute Truth:



- **A Ruler:** used to measure items. (an foot is always 12 inches and an inch is always the same length) A ruler will help us to determine the correct measurement and absolute truth helps us to know what is right and what is wrong—it measures our morality.

- EXAMPLE: If a group of people were asked to cut a piece of string 18" long, and each was examined, it would be easy to determine if a piece was not exactly 18". Why? Because a ruler would be used to measure it. A ruler is a standard. An inch is always the same length, it never changes.



- **A Lighthouse:** both directs and protects. A lighthouse directs ships to shore and it also protects ships from danger. In the same way truth guides and protects us from doing something that is contrary to God's moral truth.

In 1 Timothy 1:18-19, Paul warns Timothy to keep hold to the faith with a clear conscience to prevent being shipwrecked in your faith.

¹⁸*This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare,*
¹⁹*holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith,*



- **An Anchor:** prevents drifting away. An anchor keeps a boat stationary and prevents it from floating away . The writer of the Book of Hebrews warns his readers to listen to the message of the prophets and of Jesus

- Hebrews 2:1

Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.

- Truth relates to religious beliefs in the same way as science and mathematics.
 - Just as 5+5 cannot be both 10 and 12
 - Just as the gravitational constant is exactly $6.67408 \times 10^{-11} \text{ m}^3 \text{ kg}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-2}$
 - So religious issues like whether there is no god, one god or many gods cannot all be true
- AND YET, A prevailing belief in our culture today is that all religions contain truth and all are valid paths to God.
 - This is known as religious pluralism

- What is Religious Pluralism?




- Religious Pluralism is not simply the coexistence of different racial, ethnic and religious groups, with social interaction between them.
- It is the belief that every religion is valid, contains truth, and should not be disregarded as a means to god simply on the basis one faith is followed or revered over another.
- 3 elements:
 - Every religion is true.
 - Each provides a genuine encounter with the 'ultimate'.
 - One may be better than the others, but all are adequate.
- Religious Pluralism often only looks at the moral or ethical topics when stating the similarities, and avoids a comparison of the essential doctrinal statements of each religion

- Pluralism is in direct opposition to Exclusivism
 - **Exclusivism** teaches that only one way to god is correct and all others are wrong.
 - An examination of other religions shows that every religion claims exclusivity.

- Why is religious pluralism so prevalent?
 - Postmodern Relativism:
 - The belief that there is no absolute truth has resulted in the belief that no one has the right to tell someone else that they are wrong
 - Statements like:
 - That's just true for you but not for me
 - That's just your reality
 - Who are you to say that someone else is wrong?
 - No one should force their beliefs on anyone else
 - Relativism...

“Challenges the view that the truth is...the same for all men everywhere at all times. The newer view regards any truth as socially constructed, contingent, inseparable from the peculiar needs and preferences of certain people in a certain time and place.”

(The Future of the Self: Inventing the Post-Modern Person”, Walter Truett Anderson, p27)
 - This view regarding truth has led to the idea that:
 - every religion has some truth
 - none should be regarded as false
 - It is arrogant to think only one religion could be true
 - Globalism:
 - Every culture is in our backyard
 -  *“While missionaries have long gone out from American locations to the rest of the world, the rest of the world now is coming to America.”*
 - *(Neighboring Faiths)*

- We are exposed to different religions in ways that we weren't years ago.
 - Coworkers, neighbors, friends who hold to faiths that you wouldn't be exposed to unless you travelled around the world.
- Exposure to others who sincerely believe differently results in an emotional desire to accept sincerity for truth
- Sloganism:
 - slogans, bumper stickers, memes, and one-liners permeate out culture.
 - People read cute statements without really thinking about the truthfulness of the statements.
 - "Sounds good, so it must be true"
- A few arguments given in support of religious pluralism
 - It is arrogant/intolerant to believe that only one religion is true
 - Atheist Charles Templeton:

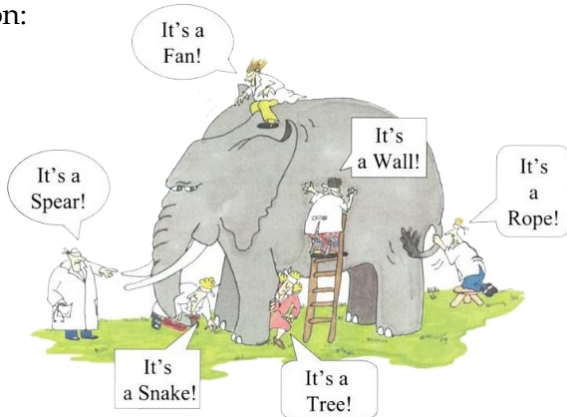
"It is insufferable presumption for the Bible to claim that besides Jesus there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved...Christians are a small minority in the world. Approximately four out of every five people on the face of the earth believe in gods other than the Christian God...Are we to believe that only Christians are right?"
- Yet, everyone, including religious pluralists, are exclusive.
- Pluralists believe they are right and anyone believing in one way is wrong, so are they being intolerant ?
- It isn't intolerant if you are right. If something is right, then all other alternatives are necessarily wrong.
- JP Moreland:

"It isn't intolerant to believe in Jesus only., because is something is true, alternatives are false."
- Just because there are many possible answers does not mean that there is not or cannot be one correct answer

- People that believe in different faiths are so sincere
 - People can be sincerely wrong
 - Sincerity is not a basis for determining accuracy or truthfulness
 - If someone sincerely believes the moon is made of cheese, it doesn't mean they are correct
- There are so many different religions, that it seems unlikely or impossible that only one is true.

“ “When I was 10 years old, I asked my mother, 'If there's only one god, why are there so many religions?' I have been pondering that question ever since, and the conclusion I've come to is that all religions are true.” (George Lucas)

- The argument is that there are many ways to 'god'
- Every religion has a piece of the truth
 - All have some truth
 - None has all truth
- Illustration:



- Six blind men feel a different part of an elephant and come to different conclusions regarding what the elephant is actually like. One blind man grabs the tusk and says, "An elephant is like a spear!" Another feels the trunk and concludes, "An elephant is like a snake!" The blind man hugging the leg thinks, "An elephant is like a tree!" The

one holding the tail claims, "An elephant is like a rope!" Another feeling the ear believes, "An elephant is like a fan!" The last blind man leaning on the elephant's side exclaims, "An elephant is like a wall!"

- Problem with the illustration:
 - None of the men were actually right, except for the storyteller who claims to have all the truth.
 - So the storyteller is actually claiming that he has an exclusive claim to the truth
 - Kenneth Samples:



• *"Ironically, while the elephant analogy attempts to validate the truth of all religions, if taken to its logical conclusion the story really shows that all religions fail to identify God adequately. So rather than affirming religious truth, the analogy implies that all religions, at least in large measure, are based on false or misleading claims."*

- All religions teach the same thing
 - Each religion has the same basic teachings of morality and a journey to reach god



• *"There are a million ways to be a human being, and many paths to what you call 'god' ...there couldn't possibly be just one way"*
(Oprah Winfrey)



• *"The essential message of all religions are very much the same"* (Dalai Lama)

- Illustration: There are many paths up a mountain. Each path may take different directions, encounter different terrain, have different experiences, but in the end they all reach the top of the mountain.



- Problems with this illustration:
 - Who is waiting for you at the top of the Mountain?
 - A personal God
 - Many gods
 - No God at all
 - A true illustration would include paths that don't reach the top
 - Each path represents a way of life, and decisions made to adjust and direct your course
 - There are similarities between the paths:
 - Morality/Ethics
 - A goal of reaching god
 - BUT there are major DIFFERENCES!
 - Compare two white substances on a table. Both are white, granular, and have similar textures.
 - However one is Sugar
 - The other is Cyanide



- Ravi Zacharias:

“Anyone who claims that all religions are the same betrays not only an ignorance of all religions but also a caricatured view of even the best known ones”

- Problems with Religious Pluralism
 - The World's Religions Are Different
 - Many faiths do share some common beliefs and moral values BUT not all religions agree on morality or how it is to be applied to different people.
 - Fundamental and irreconcilable differences divide them on many crucial issues, including:
 - The nature of God
 - The nature and person of Jesus
 - The source and focus of revelation
 - The human predicament (sin)
 - Hinduism claims that people are under the false illusion that they are distinct and separate from God.
 - Islam asserts that sin results from human weakness and willful disobedience, not an inborn tendency.
 - Christianity teaches that sin is inherent in human nature and cannot be overcome or compensated for by good works.
 - The nature of salvation
 - The destiny of humankind.
 - The World's Religions Are Irreducible
 - Religions are so diverse in belief and worldview orientation that they defy attempts to synthesize them to a single common theme or essence
 - The World's Religions Are Contradictory
 - Christianity, affirms that Jesus Christ is God incarnate (God in human flesh).
 - Islam, asserts that Jesus was merely a human being.
 - Traditional Judaism also denies Christ's deity.
 - William Lane Craig

“Now this view, which one often hears expounded by laypeople and college sophomores, is rooted in ignorance of what the world's great religions teach. Anyone who has studied comparative religions knows that the worldviews propounded by these religions are often diametrically

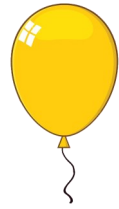
opposite one another. Just take Islam and Buddhism, for example. Their worldviews have almost nothing in common. Islam believes that there is a personal God who is omnipotent, omniscient, and holy, and who created the world. It believes that people are sinful and in need of God's forgiveness, that everlasting heaven or hell awaits us after death, and that we must earn our salvation by faith and righteous deeds. Buddhism denies all of these things. For the classical Buddhist ultimate reality is impersonal, the world is uncreated, there is no enduring self, life's ultimate goal is not personal immortality but annihilation, and the ideas of sin and salvation play no role at all. Examples like this could be multiplied"

- With regard to contradictions, it is impossible for two contradictory statements to both be true. The Laws of Logic and Reasoning does allow for it.

- 3 Principles of Logic:

- Law of **Identity**

- Something has an identity, characteristics, that makes it what it is
- The balloon is yellow, made of latex, has air inside, has a string attached, etc.
- These characteristics make it a balloon and not an airplane.



- Law of **Non-Contradiction**

- Something cannot be both A and B at the same time
- If the balloon is Yellow. It cannot also be Blue, because they are mutually exclusive and contradictory qualities

- Law of **Excluded Middle**

- Something must be either true or false.
There is no in between option.
- The balloon is Yellow.
That statement must be either true or false.

- If all religions have exclusive claims, then logically we must come to the conclusion that

EITHER:

- ALL religions are FALSE



OR

- One religion is TRUE



BUT

- More than one religion can't be true because they all have mutually exclusive and contradictory beliefs.



- Question: Do we need to examine all religions to determine which if any are true?
 - No. We do not need to examine every religion. If we find one that is true, then all others are necessarily false



- Question: Why can't we pick and choose parts of each religion?
 - While you could pick and choose elements that relate to how to live, religions address issues that are outside of our knowledge and ability to know on our own without an authoritative source that knows the answers.
 - This is where cults often originate. Someone accepts an authoritative source, like the Bible, but has a problem with certain parts, like Hell, and therefore write them out of their belief system.










- Question: How do we know that Christianity is the one true religion?
 - We examine the claims
 - We examine the evidence



- Christianity is the most falsifiable of all religions
 - The Bible has more manuscript evidence than any other sacred text
 - Historical statements can be verified
 - Archaeology has verified its truthfulness
 - Its origin was not found in one person claiming to have revelation from God or an angel or a dream that cannot be verified
- Michael C Patton (CredoHouse.org)
 - How Christianity started
 - After a PUBLIC ministry, Jesus was killed PUBLICLY
 - Christ rose from a PUBLIC tomb PUBLICLY
 - Christ PUBLICLY showed himself to the PUBLIC
 - The PUBLIC told everyone what they saw
 - How other Religions started
 - PRIVATE dream about God
 - PRIVATE angelic encounter about God
 - PRIVATE idea about God
 - One person told everyone what he saw
- Conclusions:
 - Religious Pluralism is not a valid option because while there are similarities in many religions, the differences are major and contradictory on the matters that define it.
 - Similarities are primarily moral and ethical values.
 - Moral and ethical values are based upon the underlying doctrinal teachings of each religion
 - Example: people behave a certain way because of a religion's doctrinal belief about sin, salvation, etc.
 - The underlying doctrinal teachings of each religion are different

- The underlying doctrinal teachings of other religions are mutually exclusive from each another
 - Because each is exclusive in its claims, all cannot be right
- Religions cannot be blended together
 - Blending all religions actually denies each of its own uniqueness
- Logically, only two options are possible:
 - All religions are false
 - One Religion is right
 - Once a religion is found to be true, all other religions are necessarily false
- As a result:
 - ALL RELIGIONS CLAIM EXCLUSIVITY
 - DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCES MATTER!

Session 2: The Exclusive Claims of Christianity

- **What are the Differences that Matter?**
 - While similarities between different religions might seem significant, we have seen that it is the differences that really matter.
 - A majority of the similarities relate to how one lives or what determines their moral and ethical behavior.
 - The understanding or position that each religion has toward the doctrinal differences will affect how its followers live morally/ethically.
 - There are at least 7 major doctrinal areas that each religion differs that truly matter:
 - The Source of Authority—The Bible 
 - The Nature of God 
 - The Nature and Person of Jesus
 - Fully God 
 - Fully man 
 - Lived a sinless life 
 - Died on the Cross for our sin 
 - Rose again on the third day 
 - The Nature of Man
 - The Nature of Sin
 - The Afterlife/Eternal Life
 - The Nature of Salvation—The GOSPEL
- Why is it important to understand these doctrines?
 - Before engaging people of other faiths it is important that we understand what the Bible teaches concerning these doctrines so that:
 - We can recognize the differences of other faiths
 - We can accurately share the doctrines that make Christianity exclusive
 - We can answer questions that other have about what we believe

- We can concisely and clearly present the Gospel
 - Depending on the amount of time we have, we should be able to tell someone the Gospel:
 - In 2 minutes
 - In 5 minutes
 - In 20 minutes
 - In 1 hour
- ...in varying degrees of detail.
- What does the Bible say about these exclusive and critical doctrines:

(Each of these doctrines should be studied extensively by the student of the Word)

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.” (1 Timothy 2:15)

“Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.” (1 Timothy 4:16)



- The Source of Authority – The Bible
 - The Bible is the Inspired Word of God
 - “God’s superintending of human authors so that using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error His revelation to man in all the words of the original autographs”
 - Primary Passages:
 - 2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

- 2 Peter 1:20-21
²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
- The Bible teaches Verbal Plenary Inspiration: All of the actual words in the Bible are inspired and without error
 - Nature: Verbal - "the words" (Matthew 5:18)
 - Extent: Plenary - "all, every one of them"
 - Process: God-breathed - "from God"
 - Product: An Inerrant Bible (no errors)
 - Value:
 - Doctrine
 - Reproof (conviction)
 - Correction (restoration)
 - Instruction (training) in righteousness
 - Purpose: That the man of God might be mature
- The Bible is the Infallible Word
 - If God is infallible, then so will be His Word.
 - The doctrine of Scripture's infallibility is based on an understanding of God's perfection of character.
 - To claim that the bible is infallible is to declare that the Scriptures are incapable of teaching any error.
 - God's Word is "perfect, refreshing the soul" because God Himself is perfect.
 - Psalm 19:7-8
"The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;"

- The Bible is the Inerrant Word
 - Biblical inerrancy is the doctrine that says the Bible is without error in all that it affirms
 - Simply put: God cannot err. The Bible is the Word of God. Therefore, the Bible cannot err
 - The belief in the “total truthfulness and reliability of God’s words”
(Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*)
 - Charles Ryrie:
“Even if the errors are supposedly in ‘minor’ matters, any error opens the Bible to suspicion on other points which may not be so ‘minor.’ If inerrancy falls, other doctrines will fall too.”

- The Bible is the Authoritative Word
 - “The Authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God’s words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God” (Wayne Grudem)
 - The Bible is Authoritative concerning divine commands and principles regarding the way we ought to live.
 - The Bible is an authoritative revelation of truths about God

- The Bible is Sufficient
 - Everything needed for this life is found in Scripture
 - 2 Peter 1:3-8
³ “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through

them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. ⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸ For if these qualities [Ⓛ] are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."



- The Nature of God

- He is Spirit (John 4:24)

"God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

- He is a Person

- "an individual being with a mind, emotions, and a will."

- God has an intellect (Psalm 139:17)

"How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! "

- God has emotions (Psalm 78:41)

"They tested God again and again and provoked the Holy One of Israel"

- God has a will (volition) (1 Corinthians 1:1)

"Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes,"

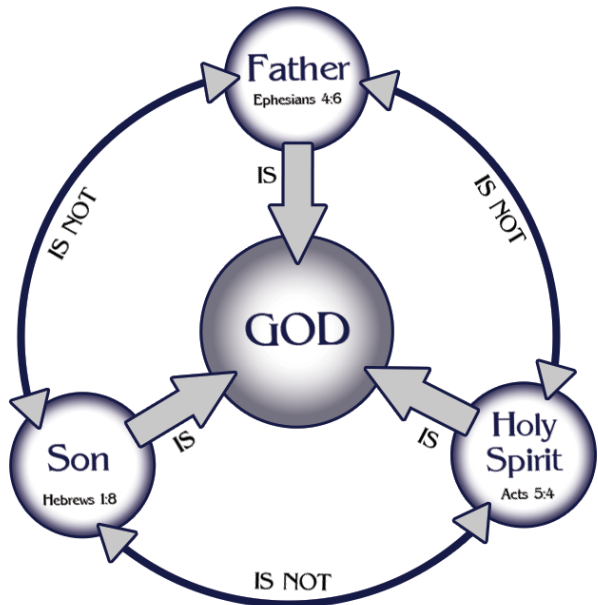
- He is Sovereign (Daniel 10:35)

"all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"

- He is Eternal (Psalm 90:2)
“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.”
- He is Omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-12)
“Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! ⁹ If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, ¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. ¹¹ If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,” ¹² even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you. “
- He is Omnipotent (Jeremiah 32:17)
“Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.”
 - God has the power to create anything from nothing (Psalm 33:6-9)
 - God’s creative power is beyond our comprehension (Job 38:1-11)
 - His powerful word sustains everything (Hebrews 1:3)
- He is Omniscient (Psalm 139:1-6)
“O LORD, you have searched me and known me! ² You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. ³ You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. ⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether. ⁵ You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. ⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.”

- He is Immutable (Never changes)
 - Malachi 3:16
“For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. “
 - Numbers 23:19
“God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?”
- He is Holy (Isaiah 6:3)
“And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory
- He is Loving (1 John 4:8)
“Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. “
 - God loves and preserves His godly people (Psalm 37:28)
 - God loved the world enough to send His Son to die (John 3:16)
- He is Merciful (Micah 7:18)
“Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. “
- He is Righteous and Just
 - Psalm 79:19
“Your righteousness, O God, reaches the high heavens. You who have done great things, O God, who is like you?”
 - He rules out of righteousness (Psalm 97:2)
 - He is righteous in everything He does (Psalm 145:17)
 - In the end, the righteous Judge will judge righteously (2 Timothy 4:8)

- He is Triune (Trinity)
 - There are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory
 - Each of the three persons is completely divine in nature though each is not the totality of the Godhead.
 - The Father is God (John 6:27; Romans 1:7; 1 Peter 1:2).
 - The Son is God (John 1:1, 14; Romans 9:5; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:8; 1 John 5:20).
 - The Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 3:16).
 - Each of the three persons is not the other two persons.
 - Each of the three persons is related to the other two but are distinct from them.



- Tozer referred to the immensity of God stating:
“God dwells in a mode of being totally beyond us and wholly above us and infinitely removed from us yet when we think about God we are trying to think about someone unlike anything we know. God says, who am I like? or to whom will you compare me? The answer being, nobody; nobody’s like God, nothing’s like God. God is like Himself. ”



- The Nature and Person of Jesus
 - The Dual Nature of the Son
 - Fully God and Fully Man
 - Hypostatic Union: *“a reference to Jesus Christ as both God and man, fully divine and fully human. Hypostasis is the Greek word for subsistence (think: individual existence). The hypostatic union, therefore, is the technical term for the unipersonality of Christ, whereby in the incarnation the Son of God was constituted a complex person with both a human and a divine nature. ”*
 (Gospel Coalition)
 - Hebrews 1:3
“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature”
 - Colossians 1:15-17
“¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by^[1] him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”
 - Colossians 2:9
“For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily ”

- The Eternality of the Son
 - Revelation 1:8; 22:13
 - ⁸ *“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty”*
 - ¹³ *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”*
 - 1 Peter 1:18-20
 - ¹⁸ *knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold,*
 - ¹⁹ *but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. ²⁰ He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you”*

- Pre-Existence of the Son
 - Existed with the Father before the world
 - John 1:1-3
 - ¹ *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*
 - ² *He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. “*
 - John 17:5
 - “And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. “*
 - 1 John 1:2
 - “the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us”*
 - Created all things (Colossians 1:15-17)

- The Incarnation of the Son
 - John 3:16-17

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him”
 - Galatians 4:4-5

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons “
 - Romans 8:3

“For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh”

- The Humanity of the Son
 - The humanity of Christ, the incarnate God-man, was Real Humanity
 - He was “very God of very God,”
 - He was fully and completely man as well.
 - He went through the common experiences of manhood
 - He suffered the common discomforts, pains, and griefs of manhood, He suffered temptation.
 - He was in every way a man.
 - References to the humanness of Jesus:
 - Matthew 1:1; 12:23; 15:22; 21:9; 26:37
 - Mark 10:48; 12:35
 - Luke 2:40; 4:2; 8:23; 9:58
 - John 1:14-18; 4:6; 7:42
 - 1 John 4:2-3
 - 2 John 7-11

- Revelation 5:5
- Hebrews 2:14-18

“¹⁴ Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery...¹⁷ Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”

- The Sinlessness of the Son

- 1 John 3:5

“You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.”

- 2 Corinthians 5:21

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. ”

- 1 Peter 2:22

“He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.”

- John 7:18

“The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood. ”

- The Death of the Son on the Cross

- Hebrews 10:10

“And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”

- Colossians 1:22
“he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him “
- The Resurrection of the Son (from Desiring God)
 - He has a bodily resurrection (John 20:37; Acts 1:9)
 - He had a Justifying resurrection (1 Timothy 3:16)
 - He had a Trinitarian resurrection
 - The Father raised him (Acts 2:24, 32; Romans 6:4)
 - The Son raised himself (John 2:19; 10:18)
 - The Spirit raised him (Romans 8:11)
- The Bible claims Jesus’ exclusivity:
 - Jesus claimed to be the only way to heaven
 - John 14:6
“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me “
 - Peter claimed Jesus is the only way to heaven
 - Acts 4:12
“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”
 - Jesus actions show he is the only way to heaven
Bruce Ware concludes:
 - Christ alone was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin
 - Isaiah 7:14
“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive

and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

- Matthew 1:18, 23

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit...“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel”

- No one else in the history of the world is conceived by the Spirit and born of a virgin mother. Therefore, Jesus alone qualifies to be Savior.
- Christ alone is God incarnate
 - As such, he alone qualifies to be Savior.
 - Anselm argued in the 11th century that:
 - Our Savior must be fully man in order to take the place of men and die in their stead, and he must be fully God in order for the value of his sacrificial payment to satisfy the demands of our infinitely holy God. Man he must be, but a mere man simply could not make this infinite payment for sin. But no one else in the history of the world is both fully God and fully man.
- Christ alone lived a sinless life
 - 2 Corinthians 2:21
 - Hebrews 4:15
 - No one else in the history of the world has lived a totally sinless life.
- Christ alone rose from the dead
 - Romans 4:24b-25
 - *“...Jesus our Lord, ²⁵who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.”*

- 1 Corinthians 15:3-4
“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,”
- Christ's resurrection from the dead demonstrates that his atoning death for sin accomplished both the full payment of sin's penalty and full victory over sin's greatest power.
- No one else in the history of the world has been raised from the dead triumphant over sin.



- The Nature of Man
 - Man was created for God's glory and God did not need to create man
 - Isaiah 43:7
“everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”
 - Man is created in the Image of God
 - Genesis 1:26-27
Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

- Being made in the “Image of God”:
 - Refers to something ‘similar not identical’
 - Refers to ‘representing’ something
 - Wayne Grudem states that “The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is like God in the following ways”:
 - Intellectual ability
 - Moral purity
 - Spiritual nature
 - Dominion over the earth
 - Creativity
 - Ability to make ethical choices
- Being part of God’s creation (Genesis 1)
 - Means he is separate from and under authority to God the Creator
 - Means he is to have dominion over creation (Genesis 1:26, 28)
- Many other religions make man equal to God by:
 - Claiming that man is of the same universal essence as God and will one day merge or unite back with the supreme essence
 - Claiming that man is able to one day become a god
- Man is the distorted image of God due to sin
 - Created without sin (Genesis 1:31)
 - Fallen due to sin (Genesis 3)
 - Still in the image of God (James 3:9)
 - But distorted (Ecclesiastes 7:29)
- Man is body (flesh), soul, and spirit
 - Body: physical, senses
 - Soul: emotions, will, intellect
 - Spirit: ability to know the Divine,

- 1 Thessalonians 5:23
“Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- Hebrews 4:12
For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.



- The Nature of Sin
 - “Sin is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature” (Wayne Grudem)
- Origin of Sin
 - God did not create sin
 - Sin was present in the angelic world with the fall of Satan and his angelic followers
 - Sin entered into the human race through Adam’s disobedience (Genesis 3:1-19)
- Extent of Sin
 - Affects all mankind (Romans 5:12-21)
 - All are born in sin (Psalm 51:5; 58:3)
 - All are inherited sinners from Adam— Original Sin (Romans 5:12)
 - Affects creation (Romans 8:18-22)
- Consequences of Sin
 - Separation from God (Isaiah 59:2)
 - Worthy of God’s wrath (Ephesians 2:3)
 - Enemies of God (Romans 5:10)

- Slaves to sin through a fallen nature
- Results in Death (Romans 6:23)
 - Physical Death
 - Spiritual Death
- The Finality of Sin
 - It will end (Revelation 21:1-4)
 - God will judge (Romans 1:18; Revelation 20:11-15; Hebrews 9:27)



- The Afterlife/Eternal Life
 - All are given this one life to determine eternal destiny
 - All will be judged upon death
 - Hebrews 9:27
“And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment”
 - Judgment is not based upon works/deeds
 - Ephesians 2:8-9
For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast.
 - Romans 11:6
But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.
 - John 3:36
“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”
 - The Saved will be with God for eternity
 - John 3:16, 36
 - John 5:24
“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears

my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life“

- The Unsaved will be separated from God for eternity
 - Revelation 20:15
“And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”



- The Nature of Salvation—The GOSPEL
[The Gospel addresses each of the 6 doctrines above]
- Why is it vital that we get the Gospel right?
 - The Gospel message addresses each of the doctrinal issues referenced above
 - The Gospel is what we are commanded to proclaim to the world
 - Matthew 28:18-20
¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.
- So that we:
 - Do not misrepresent the gospel message
 - Do not take away or water down the gospel message
 - Do not add anything to the gospel message
 - Do not confuse the gospel with other faiths

- What the Gospel is NOT:
 - Getting spared from eternity in Hell (that is a benefit of the Gospel)
 - Reaching out to Jesus when your life is going so bad, hoping he will make it better
 - Saying a simple prayer

- The Elements of what the Gospel is:
 - God is holy, righteous and Just
 - Man was created by God
 - To have fellowship with God
 - To glorify God
 - Man disobeyed God
 - Became separated from God
 - Became dead in sin
 - The Son of God (Jesus Christ) took upon flesh becoming man
 - Lived a sinless life
 - To be a sacrifice capable of paying the price of sin
 - Died a sacrificial death on the cross
 - To make the payment for sin
 - Rose again after three days
 - To show the sufficiency of his payment for sin
 - God offers salvation to those who repent and place their trust in the sacrificial payment of Christ

THE GOSPEL

“The Gospel is the good news of the person and work of Jesus Christ, who lived, died, and rose again bearing our sins on the cross that whoever would repent and trust in Him will be saved. For the Creator of the universe, who is Holy, Righteous, Just, and Merciful; has reached out in his mercy and grace and by his love provided a means of salvation to all those who have turned away from their creator, who were created in his image yet separated themselves from Him to the point of becoming an enemy of God, by sending his only Son, Jesus Christ, to take upon flesh becoming fully God and fully man, and then lived a perfect sinless life that we should have lived, and willfully gave up his life to die on a cross where he took the punishment we deserved, was buried, and on the third day rose again to prove that his payment for our sins sufficiently and completely satisfied the wrath of God. He paid the penalty of our sin fully. And now he offers this forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to himself for all who would repent and place their trust in the work of Christ to no longer be dead in sin and eternally separated from God but rather made alive and adopted as His child to be with him and to enjoy him forever.”

The Nature of God

Holy, Just, Righteous, Good, Loving, Merciful, etc...

The Nature and Person of Jesus

Fully God, full Man, Died for our sin, Rose again

The Nature of Man

Created good, but sinned, Now fallen he is separated from God, an enemy of God

The Nature of Sin

God in His justice will pour out His wrath upon sin

The Nature of Salvation

Christ, God in flesh, lived the life we couldn't live, died and bore the sin we deserved to bear, was raised to life to confirm the payment was sufficient, and offers salvation to all who repent and trust in Him as Savior and Lord

The Nature of Eternity

God's wrath poured out on those apart from Christ will result in eternal separation from God, while those in Christ will experience eternity with God

- The Gospel in the words of...

- Sam Storms:



“The gospel, then, is the gloriously great good news of what our triune God has graciously done in the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ to satisfy his own wrath against us and to secure the forgiveness of sins and perfect righteousness for all who trust in him by faith alone. Christ fulfilled, on our behalf, the perfectly obedient life under God’s law that we should have lived, but never could. He died, in our place, the death that we deserved to suffer but now never will. And by his rising from the dead he secures for those who believe the promise of a resurrected and glorified life in a new heaven and a new earth in fellowship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit forever.”

- David Platt:



“the good news that the Holy and Just and Gracious Creator of all things has looked upon hopelessly rebellious men and women and He has sent His Son, God in the flesh, to bear His wrath against sin on the cross, to show His power over sin in the resurrection so that everyone who turns from their sin and trust in Him, repents and believes in Him, will be reconciled to Him forever.”

- John Piper:



“the news that Jesus Christ, the righteous one died for our sins, rose again eternally triumphant over all his enemies, so that there is now no condemnation for those who believe, but only everlasting joy. That’s the Gospel”

- Mark Dever:



“that God made us and everything there is and He is good and he made us good; but we, made in God’s image, made to know Him, we have separated ourselves from Him, more than that, we have called down His displeasure, His wrath against us because he is good and we have done that we want rather than what he wants, it’s what the Bible calls sin. We have decided to live our lives separate from God, apart from him, and really when you read the Bible and come to understand it, against him. Now God would be entirely just to let us go. There is no reason, apart from himself, that would in any way require him to do anything other than judge us eternally...and yet in his amazing mercy, this God, infinite, and good; this God that we’ve offended, this heavenly Father, that we have told to shove off and get out of our lives, this same God has come and sought us in love. The eternal Son of God, took on flesh, the son incarnate, Jesus of Nazareth, fully God, fully man, lived the life that we should’ve lived, dies on the cross, receiving the punishment that we should’ve received, was raised from the dead proving that his claims were true, vindicating the claims of who he was and what his mission was, and ascended to heaven, and is our advocate now. And he calls us to repent of our sins and to trust him. To turn from serving ourselves and to trust fully in what He’s done on the cross...and so to be reconciled back to Him...to be reconciled back to God.”

Faith in Jesus alone saves, and saving faith must be placed in him alone.

We do not add Jesus to our portfolio of faith objects. Christianity is not a both/and proposition; it is either/or.

Jason K Allen

Session 3: Engaging World Religions

• Different Faiths, Same Concerns

- Engaging people is about making connections
 - Is about connecting with people
 - Is Not about comparing ideologies.
- The Gospel is personal, and the relationships you build with people of other faiths should be also.
- Your testimony is a vital, powerful way to share the Gospel
- Car lot Analogy:
 - You are not the salesperson trying to convince someone to buy the car
 - It isn't about "closing the deal" or "making the sale"
 - You are more like an owner of the same car sharing your experiences with it.
- According to NAMB, American Missiologists have known that culture plays an important part in Christian Witness.
 - Three different methods of evangelism based upon culture:
 - E-1 Evangelism with people of the same culture, language and background for example: an American witnessing to another American.
 - E-2 Evangelism with people of a similar culture, for example: an American witnessing to a Frenchman.
 - E-3 Evangelism with people from a completely different culture, language and background for example: an American witnessing to an animist from the jungles of Africa.
 - Different methods are often required depending on which of the three categories you find yourself.
- Guidelines for sharing with others
 - Remove false stereotypes
 - Learn to see our neighbors as persons rather than as representatives of a religious tradition or ideology.



- Consider all people as image bearers of God rather than focusing on particular characteristics like race, ethnicity, and religion.
- Be clear and unapologetic about your own convictions.
- Work hard to know what others really believe and not be satisfied with quick and superficial reports.
- Understand that there are common elements among all people of faith, including Christians that can be used as starting points for conversations:
 - A sense of the whole/totality of existence (cosmic relationship)
 - A sense of universal moral law or norm that is above us
 - A sense of providential or destining power that directs all things
 - A sense of relatedness to a higher power (whether personal or impersonal)
 - A recognition that we need redemption/salvation/deliverance (even though some religions do not salvation as a personal reconciliation to God, they still have some form of belief regarding the after-life).

- **Challenges**

- Determining what their faith is all about?
 - Develop a Spiritual GPS about the person
 - What do they believe?
 - Not every person following a religion knows or practices every part of that faith
- Often Christianity is viewed as a cultural faith and therefore some might be reluctant to make a decision for Christ as it is seen as abandoning one's heritage
- Determining what causes people to adhere to it?
 - Why is it attractive?
 - Why do they believe it?
 - Why is it so hard for people to accept Christ instead of holding to their beliefs?

- Determining how the Gospel speaks into what they believe
 - Not just how does it line up with the Bible
- Understanding the difficulty others would have in getting you to change your beliefs
 - Where do you get your beliefs?
 - History/Tradition: things we learn from our family, our heritage
 - Experience: Things we learn from our environment and circumstances
 - Revelation: Things that have been told to us from authoritative sources
 - General Revelation: through creation
 - Special Revelation: The Bible
 - Beliefs are often formed early in life and are not easy to change
 - IQ: For some beliefs are guided by intellect, logic, and reason
 - EQ: For others beliefs are guided by emotion and feelings
 - Yet this is exactly what we are hoping happens for others. Remember, our task is to present, and maybe persuade others to consider the Gospel, but it is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict and open the heart to the truth (and He is very good at it)
- Understanding that Family-based cultures often struggle with converting more than Individual-based cultures
 - The Cost of Discipleship

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:26)
 - For some, making a decision for Christ means:
 - Being cast out by their family for abandoning the beliefs of their heritage
 - Bringing shame upon their family in the eyes of their community



- Being in danger for their life by those who view conversion as a betrayal of the faith and worthy of death
 - Converting from Islam is considered apostasy and worthy of death
 - Accepting Christ can be like abandoning your cultural heritage and taking another.
- **Considerations (things to remember)**
 - Be prepared for the questions that each culture and religion would have for us.
 - Don't be rushed to engage everything they say with your view. Listen and hear them.
 - Ask where they get their spiritual guidance from?
 - Don't push to have them question their beliefs.
 - Share your faith and let them see the difference?
 - Use connections with sacred texts to bring up conversation
 - Quran speaks about Jesus, Abraham, etc.
 - Gain the proper Perspective:
 - Inside perspective: the view of one who practices the religion:
 - This view seeks to understand the expression of the religion from the person and not just what the books say about a religion
 - Outside perspective: the view of one who observes the practice (one might recognize a religious practice but not know why it is done or its importance)
 - This view is more concerned about what studying a religion academically as opposed to understanding it experientially/personally
 - Rationalized evangelism (giving evidence that requires a decision) is not as effective today as Relationship evangelism (showing/talking about your faith that might lead to a decision).
 - Does not mean that Truth is not important or can be neglected.

- Is not the same as “Lifestyle Evangelism” where we share our faith by living it without ever engaging others personally
- We need both Gospel Doctrine and Gospel Culture.
 - Gospel Doctrine: speaks truth and does not add, remove, or alter the truth of God’s Word in any way to make it more appealing.
 - Gospel Culture: understands that everyone is a sinner in need of a savior and that love, grace, and respect should be extended to others.

• **5 Elements when engaging people of other faiths:**



- Pray
 - Pray for you: for discernment and guidance
 - Pray for them: that God will open their heart to hearing the Gospel
 - Pray with them



- Prepare
 - Know what you believe
 - Know why you believe it
 - If your faith is genuine then sharing your faith should not sound:
 - Rehearsed
 - Unclear
 - Know what they believe. (Not required but it helps to know about their faith so you can ask questions)



- Participate
 - Engaging with people involves building genuine relationships
 - Christian University GlobalNet suggests:
 - Being Genuine
 - When Jesus said to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39), He wasn’t just referring to neighbors of like faith.

- Being Respectful
 - 1 Peter 3:15
“but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect”
- Being Humble
 - It is humbling to discover how little we know about the social customs and beliefs that shape other people’s lives.
 - The religions of the East are more complicated than most of us realize. Like many denominations and sects of the West, religions like Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism are divided into many groups that are significantly different from one another.
- Being Discerning
 - Acknowledge common ground
 - Recognize differences—Remember they matter!



- Proclaim
 - Look for opportunities to turn general conversations into spiritual conversations
 - Look for opportunities to turn spiritual conversations into Gospel conversations
 - Listen for the prompting of the Holy Spirit to share your faith, your experiences, your beliefs.
 - Always be ready to share(1 Peter 3:15)
 - Ask them about their faith
 - Tell them about yours...use your testimony
 - Be bold
 - Be confident (know your stuff)
 - Be truthful

- Colossians 4:4

“At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison — ⁴that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. “

- 2 Timothy 4:2-4

²preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³For the time is coming when people will not endure sound^[w] teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

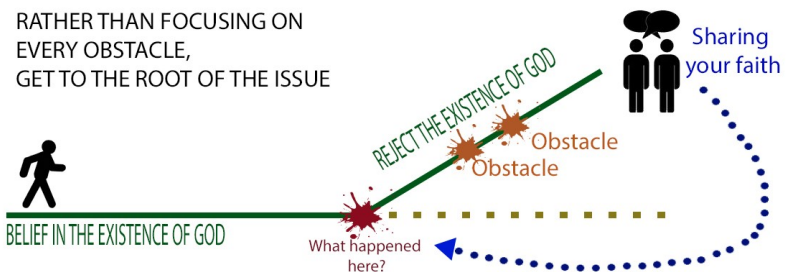


- Persuade

- Persuasion here does not mean to convince someone to become a Christian
- Persuasion here means to help remove obstacles that people might have before considering accepting the Gospel
- Conviction and Conversion to the Gospel message always has and always will be through the work of the Holy Spirit.
 - Conviction of Sin (John 16:7-11)
 - New birth (John 3:3-8)
 - New creation (2 Corinthians 5:17)
 - Quickening the dead to life (Ephesians 2:1-5)
- Persuasion does not have to result in belief or acceptance but acknowledgment that it does not disqualify the message of Christ
 - Example: If the complexity of the Trinity is an obstacle for further conversation
 - The belief in an incomprehensible God would necessitate that we mere humans

would have difficulty in understanding the nature of God.

- Use illustrations that can be applied to show the complexity in other things (i.e. Light is both a particle and a wave)
- Addressing Obstacles
 - Often there are obstacles that people use, valid or not, which prevent them from listening to someone who is sharing the good news of Christ.
 - For the Muslim it might be the Trinity
 - For the Atheist it might be reliance on Science
 - For others it might be an emotional or personal issue that they blame God for allowing to happen
 - Obstacles might not be the actual problem someone has with hearing the gospel.
 - An atheist might claim that science removes the need for God or that the Bible is unreliable
 - When the real issue is that they were hurt or offended by the Church.
 - You do not always have to break down every argument
 - Look for the real reason behind the obstacles



Session 4: Engaging Eastern Religions

- Eastern Religions account for over 1.4 billion followers and represent the 3rd and 4th largest religions in the world
 - Hinduism—900 million followers
 - Buddhism—400 million followers
 - Other Eastern religions combined—over 100 million
- Commonality among many Eastern Religions
 - Many Eastern Religions share similar beliefs:
 - Belief in multiple gods (polytheism)
 - Lack of personal relationship with god
 - Reincarnation or Rebirth (samsara)
 - Dharma
 - Karma
 - Shared belief in being released from cycle of rebirth and be united with the “ultimate’, ‘supreme entity’, or ‘nirvana’.
 - BeThinking.org states that:
 - “Eastern religion teaches that the world will be restored to a state of perfection through perfect unity, thus the foundation of Eastern religion is the concept ‘all is one’.”*
 - Typically, Eastern religions believe that the world is:
 - Temporary
 - Changing
 - Unreal
 - Unordered

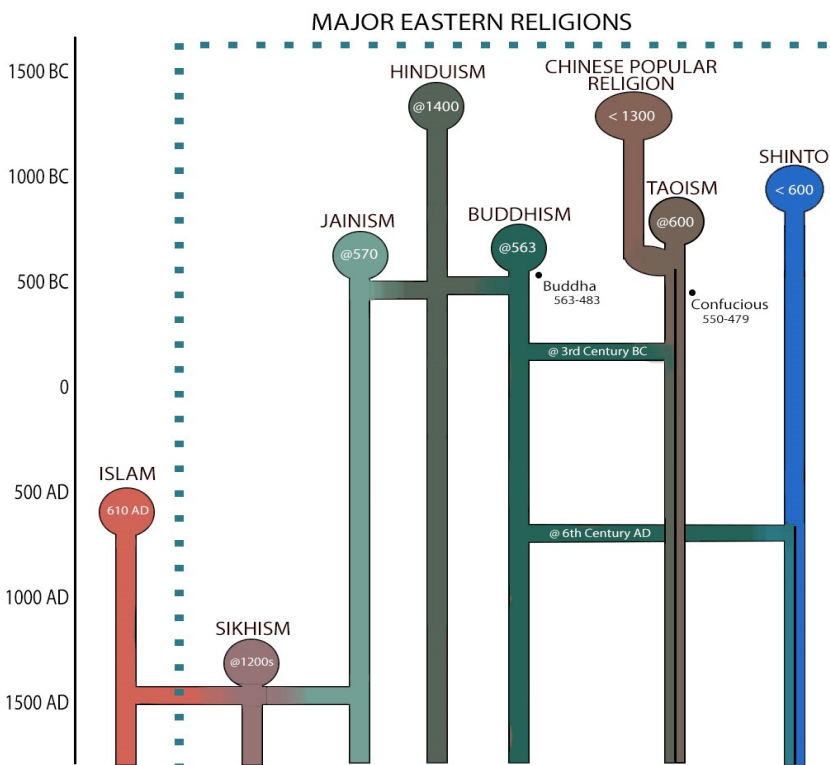
...and our perceptions are misleading and prevent us from experiencing “ultimate reality”

BUT, the Bible teaches that while the world is temporary, it is ordered and rational.

- Psalm 19:1-

“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.² Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. “

- Attractiveness of Eastern Religions
 - Observing the positive traits in the lives of people who follow certain eastern religious beliefs attract others to adopt the principles as well
 - Even the Buddha himself developed much of his philosophy after observing the peace and happiness of a man meditating under a tree and how contrasting it was to sickness, death, and despair of other people..
 - Attraction is often Subjective, ignoring or rejecting objective truth
 - Often referred to as “spirituality” rather than religion
 - Makes it easier to adopt practices without “giving up” your own faith.
- Many Eastern Religions have their origins in or connection to Hinduism



- Hinduism is the oldest of the “organized” religions in the East.
 - Buddhism was a primarily a response to Hinduism that rejected the caste system.
 - Jainism formed off of Hinduism and focused on asceticism
 - Sikhism is a merging of Hinduism and Islam
 - Taoism is an early Chinese religion and later adopted Buddhism into it
 - Shinto is a purely Japanese religion and Buddhism also joined it in Japan.
- Eastern religions covered within this session include two of the major world religions* as well as a few others that have been heavily influenced by these two.
 - Hinduism*
 - Buddhism*

 - Jainism
 - Taoism
 - Shinto
 - Sikhism

- Hinduism

- Basic Facts/Information
 - 3rd largest World Religion
 - 900 million followers (1.5 million US)
 - Cultural religion
 - Defining Hinduism is actually quite problematic because it involves various cultural as well as religious dimensions
 - Term “Hindu” is often used in reference to the “Indus River.” Invaders put a strong “h” on the word making it, “Hindus,” and it became the name of the people who lived along the Indus River, known as “the Indus” or now, “Hindus.”
 - Western adoption can be seen in practices like Transcendental Meditation and Yoga



- Historical Considerations
 - In the 3rd millennium BC the land of India was populated by dark-skinned Dravidians who followed a polytheistic religion.
 - About 2,000 BC light-skinned Aryans, who also had a polytheistic religion, migrated into the land from the north and conquered the region.
 - The gods of the Dravidians received new names and were merged into the Aryan religion. This became the foundation for Hinduism.
 - The Aryans recorded the stories, hymns, and beliefs into the Vedic literature sometime around 1500 BC.
 - Hinduism isn't really one religion, but a mixture of many religions/faiths of the region. As a result:
 - There is no known founder of Hinduism.
 - There are no credal statements of faith
 - There is no accepted figure of authority
- Core Beliefs
 - Source(s) of Authority:
 - 4 Vedas
 - Rig-Veda
 - Sama-Veda
 - Yajur-Veda
 - Atharva-Veda
 - Vedas are the earliest sacred texts in Hinduism
 - Each is divided into several smaller books
 - Most of the collection is made up of praise and hymns to various gods
 - Brahmanas: countless commentaries on the Vedas
 - Upanishads: the most important body of literature in Hinduism
 - 10 Themes in the Upanishads:
 - Brahman: ultimate reality (god)
 - Atman: a soul or self

- Tat Tvam Asi (“you are that”)
- Samsara: cycle of rebirth
- Maya
- Karma: debt built up in this life (good/ bad)
- Moksha: release from samsara
- Monism
- Yoga
- Satcitananda
- Bhagavad Gita (@200 BC, author unknown)
 - Most widely followed text for Hindus
 - Tells the account of Krishna (a human manifestation of Vishnu) and Arjuna
 - Gurus: teachers who have experienced God
- God: Brahman: Ultimate source/Supreme essence (impersonal)
 - Has elements of 3 different forms of how god is viewed:
 - Monotheistic in the sense that Brahman is the ultimate source of the universe and other gods are manifestations of Brahman
 - Polytheistic in the sense that there are millions of individual gods that are worshipped as a unique entity
 - Pantheistic in the sense that everything is ultimately made up and will return to Brahman
 - Monism: the belief in one fundamental reality
 - Brahman is spoken of in 2 ways:
 - Saguna Brahman: viewed “with qualities” like love, just, creator, etc.
 - Nirguna Brahman: viewed “without qualities” and is ultimately the only proper way god should be described
 - Human qualities should not be imposed upon the ultimate reality

- Vishnu and Shiva—2 primary manifestations of Brahman
- Krishna:
 - A manifestation of Vishnu
 - Mentioned extensively in the Bhagavad Gita
 - Considered the supreme form of personal godhead by Hare Krishnas
- Millions of gods in the Hindu faith
 - There are gods for almost every aspect of life, as well as personal or family gods.
 - Each of these gods is ultimately a physical manifestation of Brahman or Shiva and Vishnu (which are actually manifestations of Brahman)
 - Different regions have different names for their gods resulting in the large number of gods being cited (for example: the god of fertility may be called by one name and by another in a different part of India. Also, each god is said to have a male and female manifestation)
- Man (atman) is a soul/essence or individual force
 - Tat Tvam Asi: “You are That”
 - Everyone and everything is ultimately made up of the same essence and share in the same essence as Brahman
 - The goal is to achieve the realization that your Atman is Brahman
- Samsara: wheel of rebirths until release (moksha) into oneness with Brahman
 - Flag of India has a wheel in the center of it.
 - Upon death, your atman will migrate to a new life and you will live another life .
 - The wheel that turns is divided into different

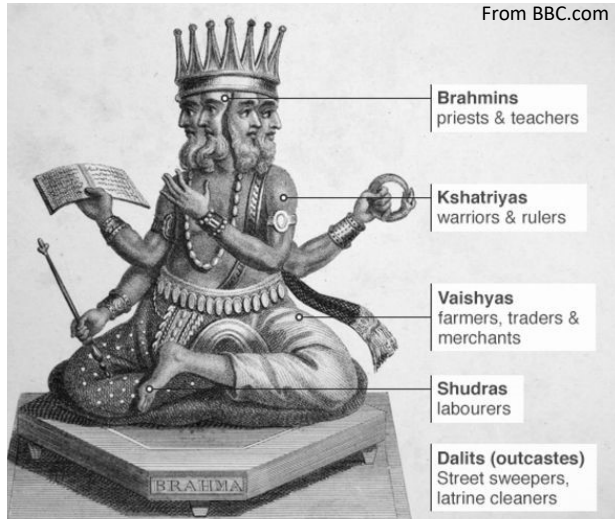


periods of time that last anywhere from 432,000 years to 1.7 million years .

- Dharma: “duty” .
 - The moral or ethical law that governs all one does
 - Whatever you ‘do’ will affect your karma
- Karma:
 - Literally means “act or deed”
 - karmic debt is built up in this life and results in progression or regression in the next life.
 - According to Hinduism:
 - It is the immutable law of cause and effect
 - Answers the question of suffering: If someone is born blind or suffering from deformity it is the result of bad karma in a previous life.
 - Differs from Scripture’s “reap what you sow”
 - Galatians 6:7
“Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.”
 - Karma refers to acts being done in this life that will affect your status in the next. Whereas in the Bible “reaping what you sow” refers to consequences for your actions here in this life
 - Karma makes us believe that if we do good things (acts) then we are deserving of something good in return whereas Scripture clearly teaches that good that we receive comes from God according to His good pleasure (James 1:17; Matthew 5:45; Ecclesiastes 9:2)
 - Many Christians mistakenly use the term ‘karma’ not realizing the meaning of the word and how it plays into the core doctrines of eastern religions

- Moksha: release from karma and samsara
 - Is essentially “salvation” or liberation
 - Means “release”
 - The goal of Hinduism: the appropriation of good karma and the realization of the truth that your atman is one with Brahman.
 - 3 ways to break the cycle:
 - Way of Works: dharma, total obedience to purify your soul
 - Way of Knowledge: total rejection and denial of oneself
 - Way of Devotion: to the worship of a particular god
- Yoga:
 - Another term that has found influence in Western culture even among Christians.
 - Yoga in the American vocabulary refers to certain kinds of guided exercises, like spiritual aerobics that include meditation for a more holistic exercise
 - Yoga is the fourth of six schools of Hindu philosophy
 - There are several types of Yoga
 - Represents a form of liberating oneself through meditation, breathing techniques, posture, and the use of sounds (“aum”).
 - The ‘aum” sound is believed to be the sound that resonates throughout the entire universe
 - Once one connects with this sound they are able to hear words of revelation and insights that lead to release
- Caste system:
 - Hindus believe that people are born into a caste based upon their karmic experience in a previous life.

- 4 primary categories (and one lesser):



- Brahmins (priests, scholars, teachers) Only Brahmins could have any hope of attaining moksha. Members of other castes would have to wait until a future life in the hope of returning as a Brahmin
 - Kshatriyas (rulers, warriors, admins)
 - Vaishyas (merchants, traders, agriculturalists)
 - Shudras (servants and laborers)
 - Outsiders or Untouchables (officially outlawed in 1947)
- Summary:
 - Brahman is ultimate reality.
 - Man is atman and made of the same essence as Brahman
 - Man is in a cycle of rebirth (samsara) due to the level of bad karma (karmic debt)
 - Sin is an illusion
 - Salvation or moksha is the release from the wheel of samsara that occurs through devotion,

mediation, good works and self-control

- At Moksha man is united with Brahman's essence, no longer existing individually

- Engaging Hindus
 - Hindus do not believe that God is knowable.
 - The Bible clearly teaches that He is knowable through:
 - General Revelation: Creation (Romans 1:18-20)
 - Special Revelation: His Word (Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:16-17)
 - Christianity teaches a relationship with a loving, forgiving God, something they don't have
 - Hindus are often very open to talking about Christian beliefs.
 - They do not believe Christians are 'wrong', just not as 'right' or accurate as Hindu teachings
 - They may have heard parts of stories that are in the Bible but never heard or read it for themselves.
 - Christianity teaches forgiveness of sin through Christ and assurance of salvation
 - The reality of sin and its consequences is an important teaching because:
 - It shows what we are in need of being saved
 - It shows that we are not capable of saving ourselves
 - It elevates Christ all the more as the one who offers freedom from sin as a free gift
 - This is foreign to Hindus who won't know if they will/can break the chain of samsara and experience Moksha
 - Salvation for the Christian is eternity with God, not eternity united in essence with Brahman where one loses all sense of themselves

- Buddhism



- Basic Facts/Information

- 4th largest World Religion
 - 400 million followers (1.5 million US)
 - Originated in India, migrated east into China and across to Japan

- Historical Considerations

- Founder of Buddhism is Siddhartha Gautama (The Buddha)

- Born around 560 BC
 - Many believe that he was not the first Buddha (enlightened one)
 - Rather he was one in a long line of Buddhas both before and after the one born in 6th century BC (like the Dalai Lama)
 - Jesus is viewed by many Buddhists today as one who had many previous lives and view him as an “enlightened” man.
 - Dalai Lama said of Jesus:
"Jesus Christ also lived previous lives...So, you see, he reached a high state, either as a Bodhisattva, or an enlightened person, through Buddhist practice or something like that."
 - And that his teachings are more important than his life
 - Others place him above others and even revere him as a god

- Tradition says that he traveled outside the palace and saw 4 men:

- An old man
 - A sick man
 - A dead man being carried to his grave
 - A man meditating under a tree
 - The man seemed happy and peaceful

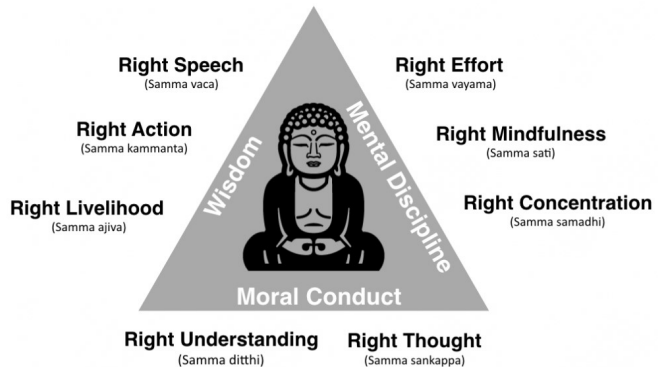
- After seeing these four men, he was determined to find meaning in life (“to solve the riddle of life”).
 - He studied the Upanishads—yet found no peace
 - He tried self-denial, even starving himself (asceticism) — yet found no peace
 - He realized that this world was filled with suffering
 - Finally, he sat under a tree for 40 days and nights.
 - He was said to have experienced the highest form of enlightenment, understanding, or consciousness of God—known as Nirvana.
 - Nirvana means “the blowing out” of desire.
 - From that time he was known as The Buddha, which means “The Enlightened One”
- Buddha’s understanding of Hindu teachings
 - Accepted the idea of rebirth/reincarnation known as samsara, but different from Hinduism
 - Accepted dharma and karma
 - Rejected the idea that man has an atman that is part of Brahman
 - Although belief in an ongoing past and future lives, there is no constant essence or real "you" that passes from one life to the next.
 - There is not any specific, ongoing being that is "incarnated" in each new life
 - Rejected the caste system and believed anyone could reach enlightenment and not just the highest caste
- Three primary schools of Buddhist thought developed after Buddha’s death:
 - Theravadas:
 - Prevalent in Burma and Thailand
 - Teaches Buddha is a great teacher
 - Salvation comes from living as a monk

- Mahayanas:
 - Zen Buddhism is another form of Mahayanas
 - Larger group mostly in Korea, China, and Japan
 - Teaches Buddha is a savior and trusting in him can result in 'salvation'
- Vajranyana:
 - Also known as Tibetan Buddhism
 - Enlightened beings are born on earth, live on earth, and teach us on earth.
 - The Dalai Lama is a Buddha living on earth to teach the Dharma in the current age
- Core Beliefs
 - Source of Authority:
 - Rejected the teachings of the Vedas and the Upanishads as divine—saying they are no help
 - Mahayana Sutras, The Tripitaka (Pali Canon), and the Tibetan Book of the Dead are three major noncanonical Buddhist texts.
 - Mahayana Sutras: believed to be, either literally or metaphorically, the actual words of the Buddha
 - The Pali Canon, which means “the word of Buddha,” are commentaries on the Sutras, treatises on the Dharma, and collections of quotes, histories, grammars, etc.
 - Tibetan Book of the Dead: describes in detail the stages of death from the Tibetan point of view
 - The Teachings of the Buddha are considered authoritative
 - The earliest copies available of his writings are from the first century AD, some 500 years after the Buddha's death
 - Zen Buddhists reject all sacred texts

- God:
 - Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha—564-484 BC)
 - While not a god, he is worshipped as a god by most followers of Buddhism
 - No creator god, but gods are often rebirthed man coming back to help teach the way to enlightenment
 - God's existence is seen as irrelevant to man's goal of reaching enlightenment
- Enlightenment ('Salvation'):
 - 4 Noble Truths:
 - Truth of Suffering: to live is to suffer
 - Truth of the Cause of Suffering: suffering is due to attachment to life.
 - Truth of the End of Suffering: by eliminating attachment, or desire one can be released from suffering.
 - We suffer due to:
 - Poverty
 - Poor health
 - Death of a loved one
 - ...we hold on to the desire for ...
 - Material things (wealth)
 - Good health
 - Presence of loved ones
 - ...and other things for our happiness that must be let go
 - Truth of the Path to the end of Suffering the elimination of attachment is accomplished by the Eightfold Path
 - Eightfold Noble Path to enlightenment divided into 3 categories:
 - Wisdom:
 - The Right View: understanding the truths of existence

- The Right Intention: being willing to achieve enlightenment
- Ethics/Morals:
 - The Right Speech: saying all that is and only what is required
 - The Right Action: doing all that is and only what is required
 - The Right Livelihood: being a monk
- Discipline
 - The Right Effort: directing one's energy properly
 - The Right Mindfulness: meditating properly
 - The Right Concentration: maintaining continuous focus

The Buddha's Noble 8 Fold Path



www.jaysdadblog.com

- Salvation:
 - For the Buddhist, salvation is the release of samsara by reaching enlightenment, or Nirvana.
 - "Salvation, then, consists of release from the cycle of reincarnation by realizing that there is no cycle of reincarnation" (Neighboring Faiths, p.319)
 - Some say the goal of Buddhism philosophy is "self-extinction".

- Sin:
 - Viewed as lust after the desires of life
 - Can be eliminated by self-effort
- Engaging Buddhists
 - Point to the factual basis for the Christian faith
 - Not in an argumentative manner but while maintaining respect
 - Relate the truths about Jesus from Scripture.
 - Whereas Buddhists might teach that Jesus was an enlightened one, the Bible is clear that his teachings were that he is God.
 - Christianity is based upon factual events that were witnessed by many, as opposed to Buddhism
 - 2 Peter 1:16
 - “For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”*
 - Compare/Contrast the 4 Noble Truths of Buddhism with Christianity:
 - Life is about Suffering:
 - God created everything and His creation was good (Genesis 1:31)
 - Later Solomon wrote that all is worthless and there is suffering in this world” (Ecclesiastes 1:2)
 - What changed? Sin (Genesis 3)
 - Life’s Suffering is from our desires:
 - According to the Bible suffering is the result of man’s sin against God, traceable to the first humans.
 - Man traded true satisfaction in God for selfish pleasure.
 - Adam’s sin is passed down to all men (Romans 5:12) and even affects all of creation (Romans 8:22)

- Life's Suffering can be removed:
 - For Buddha there was no understanding of being created good but now fallen due to sin, so there was no true hope of anything after life.
 - Buddhism will insist that release or salvation from suffering must come by one's own attempt or self works
 - The Bible teaches that man will never be able to reach perfection and be free from sin by his own efforts (Ephesians 2:8-9;)
- Life's Suffering Can be Eliminated by Right Living: (but who's right living?)
 - Buddhism teaches that if one lives his life 'right' (right living, right discipline, right thinking) 'salvation' is possible.
 - The Bible teaches that no one is able to live perfectly (Romans 3:10)
 - The Bible teaches that Jesus took upon flesh and lived the perfect life we couldn't, and offered up his life for us on the cross to pay the penalty of our sin (Romans 6:23) so that we might have eternal life (salvation) by trusting in Him
 - Salvation means eternal life with God for the Christian and not extinction as the Buddhist would insist.
 - Right living isn't possible by us, but Christ's right living and subsequent death and resurrection can and does bring about the salvation.

NOTE: The next four religions (Jainism, Sikhism, Taoism, and Shintoism) will be covered briefly due to their limited influence in the West and their overall number of followers. They are included here since they are considered offshoots of Hinduism or have mixed with Buddhism.

Each will be briefly discussed with a combined section at the end about engaging followers of these faiths.

- Jainism



- Basic Facts/Information

- 4 million followers (4,000 in US)
 - Began in India
 - Origin @6th century BC in opposition to Hinduism
 - Shares several nuances of Buddhism, to the point that some believe it was influenced by Buddhism or vice-versa.

- Historical Considerations

- Most consider the founder of Jainism to be Vardhamana Mahavira (@599-527, or 467 BC)
 - Contemporary of Siddhartha Gautama (born 560 BC) and some hold that he was of the same lineage as the Buddha.
 - Others believe he was the last of 24 teachers known as Tirthankaras
 - Following the deaths of his parents he embarked on a journey of self discovery
 - Joined an ascetic group
 - After more than a decade of self-deprecation he experienced what he called 'nirvana'.
 - He became a Jina (the Conqueror), "victorious over the effects of karma and the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth". (World Religions, p218)
 - Over 200 years after his death a council was held to address disagreements by his followers. The result of the council was 2 distinct sects:

- Digambaras (clad in the sky): Salvation can only be achieved by discarding all physical attachments (including clothes)
- Shvetambaras (clad in white): wear white robes
- A Few Core Beliefs
 - Shares several teachings of Hinduism and Buddhism such as:
 - Karma
 - Rebirth/Reincarnation
 - Sources of Authority
 - 24 books called the Agamas.
 - Believed to be the teachings of Mahavira
 - They were compiled by disciples
 - Around 350 BC a famine killed many Jain monks and many of the Agamas were lost
 - Digambaras believe all are permanently lost
 - Shvetambaras believe all but the last have survived
 - So the preservation of the original text is highly unlikely
 - Sutras and commentaries are based upon the Agamas
 - God:
 - They do not believe in a God or gods in the way that many other religions do
 - They do believe in divine beings who are worthy of devotion.
 - The only 'gods' that exist for Jains are pure souls that are omniscient, perfectly happy and eternal.
 - Anyone could become such a 'god' because every being has the potential to become such a perfect soul.
 - Man: Jains believe that human beings, animals, and plants all contain living souls.

- Each is considered of equal value
- Each should be treated with respect and compassion.
- As a result Jains are strict vegetarians
- Sin:
 - Mankind is contaminated and therefore is in need of being released into a state of eternal bliss (nirvana).
 - No explanation is given for the origin of this contamination
- Salvation:
 - The goal is to reach 'Nirvana' by breaking cycle of rebirths
 - Only the actions of the individual will contribute to salvation
 - Working toward salvation is the result of the three guiding principles of Jainism, the 'Three Jewels':
 - Right belief: in the teachings of Mahavira
 - Right knowledge: of the sacred texts
 - Right conduct: living according to the sacred texts
- Taoism
 - Basic Facts/Information
 - About 20 million followers worldwide
 - Is part of the larger popular Chinese religions
 - Taoism is also known as Daoism
 - Historical Considerations
 - Grew from various religious and philosophical traditions in ancient China
 - Taoism has no founder was based on the teachings of the Tao Te Ching from the 6th century BC
 - There are two main schools within Taoism, usually called "philosophical Taoism" (*Tao-chia*) and "religious Taoism" (*Tao-chaio*).



- A Few Core Beliefs

- Tao:

- Tao is not god or worshipped. It is the nature of the universe.
 - God may or may not even exist.
 - God does not come into play in the Tao faith
 - Tao is a system of guidance in the universe
 - Includes several concepts in one word:
 - The source of creation
 - The ultimate
 - The inexpressible and indefinable
 - The unnameable
 - The natural universe as a whole
 - The way of nature as a whole
 - Yin/Yang: Not the same as dualism. 2 coexisting forces that are in harmony with one another (action/ non-action, light/dark, hot/cold)
 - The Taoist draws closer and closer to nature throughout their life, death is just the final step in achieving complete unity with the universe
 - The goal is a healthy happy long life in order to upgrade our forms in to more higher level and understand more about everything around earth and universe.

- Sikhism

- Basic Facts/Information

- 23 million followers worldwide (about 80,000 in US)
 - Founded in Punjab province (NW India), 1500s AD



- Historical Considerations

- Originated in 1460s in attempt to establish religious faith that drew upon both Hinduism and Islam
 - Several Hindu provinces of India were ruled by Muslim kings including the Punjab province in north-east India

- Sikhism drew beliefs from Hinduism, like karma and samsara, and beliefs from Islam like one God
- Nanak (1469–1538 AD) is viewed as a ‘founder’ of the Sikh faith.
 - He was born to Hindu parents in India.
 - Is said to have received a direct call from God establishing him as a guru
 - He is the first of 10 gurus. Last one declared guruship forevermore on the sacred text
 - Guru Granth Sahib: is the word incarnate, not in physical sense but directly into the human heart
- A Few Core Beliefs
 - One God (from Islam), but does not name the god
 - Everyone has direct access to God
 - Everyone is equal before God
 - Softer form of reincarnation (human to human only)
 - No one can know god with a mediator
 - When a Sikh wants to see God, they look both at the created world and into their own heart and soul.
 - The goal is to see the divine order that God has given to everything, and through it to understand the nature of God.
 - Most human beings can’t see the true reality of God because they are blinded by their own self-centered pride and concern for physical things.
 - Three Duties of Man: Pray, Work, and Give
 - Keeping God in mind at all times.
 - Live honestly. (i.e. Avoid gambling, begging, or working in the alcohol or tobacco industries.)
 - Giving to charity and caring for others.
 - Ultimately Salvation is through works and hope of release from samsara

- Shintoism



- Basic Facts/Information

- 4.2 million followers (purely Japanese)
 - Japan's national religion. Superiority of Japan and its people
 - Shinto comes from Chinese characters for *Shen* ('divine being'), and *Tao* ('way') and means 'Way of the Spirits'.
 - Modern Shintoism has been widely influenced by Buddhism so that there is a national commitment to the Shinto faith and a religious commitment to Buddhism

- A Few Beliefs

- Shinto is not a way of explaining the world.
 - Communication with Kami through rituals such as divination, spirit possession, and shamanic healing
 - Kami are not God or gods.
 - They are spirits that are concerned with human beings
 - They appreciate our interest in them and want us to be happy
 - If they are treated properly they will intervene in our lives to bring benefits like health, business success
 - Hard form of reincarnation. Rebirth can be in the form of:
 - Human to human
 - Human to Animal
 - Human to nature (such as in the form of a tree)
 - The ultimate goal of Shinto is to transcend this life and become a Kami

- Engaging Jains, Taos, Sikhs, and Shintos

- Connect with Jains on the issue of the value of life:
 - Jains have a great value for all life.
 - The Bible teaches that man is created in God's image

and should therefore be held in high value

- The Bible places all life in God's hands as the Creator of all life
- Address the burdensome lifestyle of the Jain
 - The vows of Jainism are virtually impossible to follow
 - The Bible teaches that man cannot possibly be good enough on his own and that is why he is in need of a savior.
 - The need for and provision of a Savior is a message of hope to the Jain, and so Speak the Gospel to them
- As with other eastern religions, engaging is most effective when:
 - Sharing from Scripture
 - Drawing from some aspect of their belief and explaining the Christian view
 - Example: Yin/Yang
 - For the Tao is represents a harmony between two equal yet opposing forces
 - For the Christian, a holy God is ultimately in control and will have victory over sin/evil

Session 5: Engaging Islam

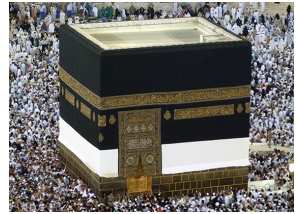


- Facts/Basic Information
 - Islam means “submission”
 - 2nd largest World Religion
 - 1.2 billion followers (1.5 million US)
 - Began in Mecca and Medina in modern day Saudi Arabia
 - Islam is not just a religion, but is a political, social, and cultural faith. No separation between religion and state.

- Historical Considerations

- Origin:

- Founded by Mohammad (570-632 AD)
 - Muhammad’s family was very important and assisted in guarding the idols located in the Kaaba.
 - The Kaaba is the most important shrine in Mecca and contained about 360 objects representing the various gods.
 - The most important object is the “black stone” which is located in the center of the shrine (all other objects were cast out later when Islam took hold)
 - Muhammad married when he was 25 to a very wealthy 40 year old woman who owned several caravans.
 - This provided him with access to a wide range of people and ideas.
 - While meditating alone in some caves, he claims to have had a vision from the Angel Gabriel
 - Occurred in 610 AD when he was 40 years old and continued for 22 years (until 632 AD) which became the Qur’an.
 - Occurred in the month of Ramadan
 - Heard the angel say “Arise and warn” the people



of Arabia to turn from idolatry and worship the one true god.

- Returns to Mecca and preaches about one god.
- In 632 AD Muhammad and his followers went to Medina
 - The departure from Mecca to Medina is known as “the Hegira’
 - Considered the origin of the Islamic era
 - Islamic calendar is dated from this time
- After several battles in Medina Muhammad returns to Mecca (630 AD)
- Clears out the Kaaba except for the “black stone”, viewed as a symbol for monotheism
- Muhammad dies unexpectedly in 632 AD.
- Following his death four major caliphs (632-661 AD) led the Islamic faith
 - Known as the “Rightly Guided Caliphs”
 - Abu Bakr: close friend of Muhammad
 - Umar (634—644)
 - Uthman (644-656)
 - Selected by the Council of Electors
 - Credited with finalizing the Qur’an and destroying all variant copies.
 - Ali (Muhammad’s uncle)
 - Afterward the first major division of Islam occurred over disagreement concerning succession
- Major divisions:
 - Sunni (85-90% of Muslims, primarily Arab Muslims)
 - Shia/Shiite (primarily Persian Muslims)
 - Many sub groups under Shia and Sunni like the many denominations of Christianity
 - Different leadership depending upon who is considered the rightful successor (caliph) to Mohammad

- Sunnis:
 - Believe that Muhammad had no rightful heir
 - Believe the religious leader (caliph) should be elected through a vote among the Islamic Council of Electors.
- Shiites:
 - Believe that only Allah, the God of the Islam faith, can select religious leaders
 - All successors must be direct descendants of Muhammad's family.
 - Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, was the rightful heir to the leadership of the Islam religion after Muhammad's death.
- Other Modern Day groups
 - al Qaeda:
 - A militant Sunni organization
 - Began as a network of Muslims fighting the Soviets in the Afghan War
 - Merged with other militant groups
 - Founded and led by Osama Bin Laden until his death
 - ISIS:
 - An offshoot of al Qaeda
 - Largely made up of Sunni militants from Iraq and Syria
 - Rooted historically from Shiite Muslims
 - Created their own Caliphate based upon
- Core Beliefs
 - Regarding Source(s) of Authority:
 - Qur'an (610-632 AD)
 - It is claimed that the Qur'an was dictated in Arabic by the angel Gabriel to Muhammad
 - The Qur'an is viewed as God's precise words.
 - It has preexisted from eternity in heaven with God as the "Mother of the Book" and was in that form uncreated and coeternal with God.

- Islam teaches that it contains the total and perfect revelation and will of God.
- The Qur'an is about four-fifths the length of the New Testament
 - Divided into 114 "surahs" or chapters.
 - Not arranged by chronology but according to size (except for the first surah)
 - There are different versions of the text
- Both Shiites and Sunni believe they have the original Qur'an
- Hadith: stories of what Muhammad said or did
- Imams:
 - Sunnis believe that the Imam is a teacher or prayer leader.
 - Shiites believe in the doctrine of the Imam,, divinely appointed leader able to take on the prophethood of Muhammad.
 - Imams are often the source of more radical ideas come out of the Shiites
- Sharia Law:
 - Shiites include Imam as authority of Allah
 - Sunnis view Imams as simply teachers of the Qur'an and Hadith
- Abrogation: in situations wherein verses contradict one another, the early verses are overridden by the latter verses.
- Islam rejects the reliability of the Bible
 - Not inspired by god
 - Horribly corrupt
 - Misinterpreted by Christians
- Regarding the Nature of God
 - Monotheistic along with Christianity and Judaism - Allah ('the God')
 - Islam rejects the Trinity
 - God is Sovereign and Merciful
 - The Sovereignty of God is emphasized in Islam, but the

idea of a relationship with a loving, covenant-keeping God is non-existent.

- No view of God as Father
- No relationship with God. Love is only seen in poetry and but not in a relationship with God
- Regarding Jesus
 - Rejects the Deity of Jesus
 - Several prophets have been used by God including Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, and Jesus
 - Islam believes::
 - Jesus was a prophet of Allah
 - Jesus was born of a virgin and sinless
 - Jesus was not killed
 - Jesus was not crucified
 - Jesus was not resurrected
 - Surah 4:157; 4:171
 - There is no really comparison between Mohammed and Jesus.
 - One says, 'Blessed are you when you persecute,' (Quran 9:111). The other says, 'Blessed are you when others persecute you' (Matt. 5:11).
 - One says, 'Go and kill' (Quran 47:3-4). The other says, 'Come and die' (Luke 9:23).
 - One says, 'Fight until you are victorious' (Quran 61:9). The other has already won the victory for us (1 Cor. 15:57).
 - Romans 10:9

"if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. "

The Bible clearly teaches that...

Jesus is Lord.....

He died and was raised....

Salvation is through Him

- Regarding Sin
 - No real concept of original sin, so no separation from God due to sin
 - Everyone is being
 - Regarding Salvation
 - Salvation is by works
 - No assurance of salvation
 - A final judgment will take place
 - The trumpet will sound and everyone will die
 - Everyone is raised to face final judgment
 - Everyone will be raised in your original reconstituted body, not a spiritual body.
 - All are then gathered before the throne and we will be there between one thousand to fifty thousand years, where we will receive judgment.
 - Everyone comes before the throne and their good works are placed on one side of the scale and their bad works on the other side of the scale.
-
- Practices—5 Pillars of faith
 - The Creed: Profession of faith “I bear witness that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah”
 - Prayer: 5 times each day (before sunrise, noon, midafternoon, sunset, and before sleep)
 - Alms (giving): a 2.5% tax
 - Fasting: Month of fasting—Ramadan
 - Observed from sunrise to sunset
 - Used to remember the giving of the Qur’an to Muhammad
 - Pilgrimage (to the Kaaba) to Mecca: once in a lifetime every Muslim is to travel to Mecca. If unable to due to physical or financial hardship, they can have someone else go in their place.
 - Islam: A Religion of Peace?
 - Common question regarding Islam especially due to extremist views in recent years.



- Yet violence is not new for Islam.
- Violence has been a part of Islam since its inception
- Christian/biblical violence vs Islamic violence
 - The Issue
 - ISIS is:
 - moving across the Middle East
 - following their faith
 - in obedience to their god
 - killing people as they go
 - How is that any different from Israel:
 - Moving into Canaan
 - following their faith
 - in obedience to their God
 - killing people as they went?
 - Christian violence
 - Occasion: Old Testament records the destruction of the Canaanites when Israel entered the Promised Land.
 - Response:
 - God waited and warned the people groups involved
 - He commanded the Israelites to accept and assimilate any immigrants from these nations, showing God was not interested in genocide
 - He sought not to destroy individual people, but to destroy the religious and cultural centers that promoted their particular evil
 - God DID NOT command that all men, women, and children everywhere were to be killed
 - Israel's Warfare Methods illustrate they were not attempting to commit "bloodthirsty massacres"
 - Occasion: Holy Roman Empire was responsible for violence during the Crusades and the Inquisition

- Response:
 - While the Christian church was responsible, the actions were contrary to biblical commands
 - Actions of Holy Roman Empire were conducted by the Christian government in the name of Christ, but not in accordance with Scripture.
 - Same can be said with other actions in history such as the use of the Bible to justify slavery.
- Islamic violence:
 - Throughout the history of Islam violence has been a part of the spread of the faith.
 - There are extremists in Islam that commit atrocities that are not in accordance with the Islamic faith, just as there are/were in the Christian faith
 - The Quran speaks about violence toward unbelievers in a similar way to that of the Bible but with distinct differences.
 - The Quran contains over 100 passages that call Muslims to take up arms against unbelievers in the name of Allah.
 - “Kill them [unbelievers] wherever you find them... And fight them until there is no more unbelief and worship is for Allah alone” (Quran 2:191-193).
 - “Strike off their heads and strike from them every fingertip” (Quran 8:12).
 - “Allah has purchased from the believers their lives and their properties; in exchange for that they will have Paradise. They fight in the cause of Allah, so they slay and are slain” (Quran 9:111).
 - “Truly Allah loves those who fight in His cause in battle array...” (Quran 61:4)
 - “The Messenger of Allah said: I have been

commanded to fight against people till they testify that there is no god but Allah, and that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah” (Sahih Muslim 1:33).

- Commands in the Quran to commit violence/kill:
 - Are not based upon a specific time period or geographical area.
 - Are directed to any and all those who do not believe according to the Islamic faith

- Engaging Muslims
 - Understand the seriousness of their religious faith
 - Conversion to another religion is apostasy and worthy of death
 - Approaching a Muslim with the Gospel places a Muslim in a difficult position because of how others will view them
 - Be prepared to address the major barriers Muslims have about Christianity, such as:
 - The Bible is unreliable
 - The Trinity is heresy
 - Jesus is not God
 - Be respectful toward their beliefs
 - Don't disparage Muhammad
 - Point 2
 - Talk about your relationship with God
 - Jesus is not just a doctrinal position. He is a Person
 - Your testimony is often one of the strongest defenses one can make for their faith
 - Many Muslims believe in dreams and visions
 - Dreams are interpreted as guidance for their lives and are to be a genuine means for the Holy Spirit to work in their hearts.
 - The testimony of many converted Muslims speak of Jesus appearing to them in dreams.

- The Key Issue:

“The key issue between Christians and Muslims is not first and foremost the identity of Allah, but the fact and meaning of the death of Jesus Christ. This is also true for Judaism and Christianity: Who was this Jesus and why did he die? Both Judaism and Islam deny the essence of Christianity—that Jesus was the long-expected Messiah, the divine Son of God, who was crucified and raised from the dead to bring forgiveness of sins and eternal life to all who believe in him.

This makes Jesus incredibly relevant and controversial in the 21st century. The massive movement of Islam (over 1.3 billion people), and the comparatively small people of Israel have explosive significance in world affairs. The most critical issue between Islam and Judaism on the one hand, and Christianity on the other, is *not* whether Islam and Judaism are monotheistic. Nor is the issue whether Islam and Judaism try to honor Jesus.

The issue is: *Do Islam and Judaism—or any other faiths besides Christianity—cherish the righteous suffering and death of the God-Man, Jesus Christ, as the only ground of our acceptance with God? “*

(John Piper)

Session 6: Engaging Judaism



- Basic Facts/ Information
 - 14 million followers (6 million US)
 - Small numbers but heavily influential on world culture, affairs, and history
- Historical Considerations
 - Some important early historical pieces
 - Judah taken into captivity by Babylon (586 BC)
 - While in Babylon they had to develop their faith without a temple or a land
 - Development of the Synagogue back in the days of Babylon
 - In a sense Judaism “developed” in Babylon
 - Then return in 516 BC
 - Destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD by Rome
 - Temple was destroyed
 - The Synagogue is the Judaism that survived the destruction
 - A major dispersion in 132 AD. Synagogues became even more important
 - While in Babylon
 - Babylonian Talmud was developed
 - Talmud was made up of:
 - Mishnah – comments on Pentateuch
 - Gemara – comments on the comments. Also includes morality in stories
 - Application of the laws in new settings that weren’t in the Hebrew Bible
 - Written and Oral tradition is accepted as authority
 - Religion of the books (plural, not just Hebrew Bible but Talmud, etc.)
 - Classical Judaism
 - Pharisees (attached to the Synagogue)

- Sadducees (attached to the Temple)
 - After destruction of temple, Sadducees (Levites) 'died' off in influence
- Essenes – “Dead Sea Scrolls”. Wiped out, they were separatists and celibate
- Zealots – killed

- Only 2 forms followed the destruction of Jerusalem
 - Pharisees
 - Messianic (lasted about 3 centuries before Gentile church took over dominance)

- Contemporary Jewish groups today
 - Is Judaism a religion, a set of ethical practices, or something else? YES, it is all
 - Pull a religious string, and the national unravels
 - Jewish Worldview: religion, nationalism, ethics, community (all to varying degrees depending on group)
 - Modern Judaism is a religion that emphasizes lifestyle and values more than beliefs, so doctrine is not emphasized nearly as much as behavior.
 - 2 parts of the Jewish faith:
 - Belief (of God, etc.) – not emphasized
 - Practice – when and how you follow the holidays, Sabbath, daily rituals, yamaka
 - Rejection of Jesus is rarely due to religious reasons, but because of ingrained worldview that isn't very religious

- Orthodox – traditional group
 - Emphasizes living according to the Law of Moses (the Torah), as it has been interpreted by the authoritative rabbinic tradition
 - Most Traditional: in belief and practice

- Pray (3 times a day like in older days), attend services
- Ritual temple replacement
- Gather with other men (need 10 to form a prayer meeting)
- Wear Jewish garb
- Represents the historical flow of Judaism
- 2 branches of Orthodox Judaism:
 - Modern Orthodoxy
 - Ultra-Orthodox (Hasidic)
- Reformed – liberal group (18th century)
 - Reaction to cold, orthodoxy (Hebrew services, etc.)
 - More Liberal, Less intensity
 - The idea of a personal Messiah has been replaced by the idea of a messianic age of goodwill that will be inaugurated by human effort.
 - The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead has been replaced by the concept of living on in the memories of descendants and society because of the good works that one has accomplished.
 - Acknowledge the need to be forgiven by God, but emphasize forgiving and seeking forgiveness from other human beings.
- Conservative
 - Does not indicate a political mindset
 - Emphasizes the desire to conserve Jewish traditions and values instead of reforming them.
 - Not very conservative
 - Greater respect for the Bible and study it, but not necessarily hold to everything in it.
 - Socially, culturally different.
 - Attempt to balance tradition on one hand with change and innovation on the other.
 - Acceptance of same-sex relationships and extend women roles in the synagogue (women rabbis)

- Secular or Cultural
 - Blended into the culture
 - Not practicing, except maybe a couple times a year (like a Christmas-Easter Christian)

- Core Beliefs:
 - God exists.
 - God is one and unique.
 - Rejection of the Trinity
 - Jesus was a good teacher but not God
 - God doesn't have a body.
 - God is eternal.
 - Prayer is to be directed to God alone.
 - The words of the prophets are true.
 - The Torah was given to Moses
 - God knows the thoughts and deeds of men.
 - Salvation comes from obedience to the Law
 - God will reward the good and punish the wicked.
 - The Messiah will come. (some form for those branches of Judaism still holding to a physical Messiah)
 - The dead will be resurrected.

- Engaging Jewish People
 - Misconceptions Christians have about Jewish people:
 - Jewish people know their Bible better than you do
 - Jewish people have their own path to God (via the Law) and do not need Christ
 - Romans 1:16:
 - “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”*
 - Depending on the branch of Judaism engaging Jewish people can be done building upon common beliefs.
 - Jewish practices like the high holidays or the Sabbath have biblical significance for the Christian

- Their Hebrew Bible is the Christian Old Testament.
 - Learn to share the Gospel from the Old Testament
 - Holy God
 - Sin
 - Wrath of God upon sin
 - Need for Redemption and forgiveness of sin (sacrifices only covered over the sin)
 - Messiah was not just a king but a Savior
 - Whenever possible use the Old Testament to answer their questions
- Discuss the Messiah
 - Learn the Messianic prophecies
 - Share the Book of Matthew with them (written to Jewish people)
 - Randy Newman:
 - You want them to see in print what Jesus said about himself, and how his teachings fit with the history of Israel and the words of the prophets. Let them encounter how brilliant, how unpredictable, how gracious, how bold, and how beautiful Jesus was and is.
 - Compare Isaiah 53 with Jesus' death on the cross
- Don't stereotype a Jewish person
 - They aren't the same as the Jews in the Bible
 - There are several branches of Judaism
- Ask questions about their beliefs
 - Does she attend synagogue?
 - What happens at Passover?
 - Why doesn't she offer sacrifices today?
 - How does she find forgiveness since the destruction of the temple?
 - What does she believe about the coming of the Messiah? How will she recognize him when he comes?

Session 7: Engaging Atheism



- Basic Facts/Information
 - Atheism/Agnosticism
 - No religion is a religion because they have a belief or values about issues like:
 - A Divine being (in their case, that there isn't one)
 - How the universe came about
 - The Purpose of Life
 - What will happen after death
 - Estimated 500 million worldwide (about 58 million in US)
 - When adding people claiming to be “non-religious” that number climbs to 1.1 billion worldwide making it the 3rd largest religion (behind Christianity and Islam)
 - Atheism: literally means “no god”
 - The belief that god or a divine being:
 - Does not exist
 - Is not responsible for the universe or in control of it
 - Is not an authority to be obeyed or worshipped
 - Denies all supernatural (miracles, Divine intervention)
 - Purely naturalistic (evolution, natural selection)
 - New Atheism: view that “religion should not simply be tolerated but should be countered, criticized, and exposed by rational argument wherever its influence arises”
 - Agnosticism: literally means “no knowledge”
 - The belief that no one can know or there is not enough evidence to indicate whether a god or divine being exists. The existence of God cannot be proven.
 - Russell’s Teapot:
 - *“I do not think the existence of the Christian God any more probable than the existence of the gods of Olympus*

or Valhalla. To take another illustration: nobody can prove that there is not between the Earth and Mars a china teapot revolving in an elliptical orbit, but nobody thinks this sufficiently likely to be taken into account in practice. I think the Christian God just as likely”
(Bertrand Russell)

- Why atheists are atheist
(Most common reasons people say they are atheists)
 - God is not necessary.
 - Science can account for everything.
“Everything in the universe can be explained in a satisfactory way without using God as part of the explanation, then there is no point in saying that God exists”
 - In centuries past, man could not explain things that science can now answer
 - Why the Sun rises and sets.
 - Where thunder and lightning come from.
 - Why people get sick.
 - Why people look like their parents.
 - How the complexity of life came into being.
 - Compare that to the number of times that a natural explanation of a phenomenon has been replaced by a supernatural one?
 - The number of times humankind has said, "We used to think (X) was caused by physical cause and effect, but now we understand that it's caused by God, or spirits, or demons, or the soul"?Zero
 - There is no real need for God
- Rejection of the Bible
 - It is just a book written by men
 - It is written by man, compiled by a church to create their religion
 - It contains errors, contradictions, social and ethical issues


- It is a 2,000 year old relic that is irrelevant in today's world
- Topics in the Bible are 'silly' and 'outdated'
 - Jonah and the fish
 - A talking donkey
 - Hell
- The Morality of the Bible and God is worse than the morality of man
 - Scripture offends them or friends/people they know:
 - Anti-gay (homophobic)
 - Anti-women—because it limits the roles of women, treats women like property in the Old Testament
 - God 'murdered' everyone except Noah and his family. That is worse than anything man would do.
 - God told the Israelites to commit genocide when they entered the land of Canaan.
 - Begs the question "Are we more moral than God?"
 - The phrase "it's the 21st century..." is often used as if the passage of time will always mean things are better.
- Been hurt by Christians or the Church
 - Christians are often viewed as hypocrites or hateful and intolerant
- The Problem of Suffering: An all-powerful God cannot possibly exist when there is so much suffering in the world
 - The issue of suffering is the number 1 problem people struggle with, even among Christians.
 - If God is all-loving and all-powerful why does he allow so much suffering?
 - How can God allow children to die of cancer?
 - How can God allow hurricanes to wipe out thousands of people?
 - The Holocaust
 - World poverty

- Influences that led atheists to become atheist
 - Growing up in a faithless family
 - Never taught why to believe the Bible
 - Faith never became their faith.
 - It was just their parents faith
 - Experiences in college—attacked their faith or offered a replacement
 - Intellectual challenges
 - Dealing with the issue of suffering
 - Trying to balance science vs faith
 - Emotional Challenges
 - Prayer didn't give them the answer they wanted
 - Friends or family that are really good people that Christians call evil and going to Hell

- Engaging Atheists
 - Remove the Obstacles
 - Work past the obstacles that are often given for not listening to the Gospel
 - Ask if there was a time when they did believe in God
 - No: If there was never a time in their life (i.e. raised in a family without belief in God)
 - See if they are open to talking about your faith and why you have found that not only does God exist, but that He desires a relationship with you
 - Yes: If there was a time when they believed
 - Ask what it is was that caused them to no longer believe in God and begin to address that/those issues.

**Remember, go back to their root issue

- Answer their Questions/Doubts
 - Giving a defense for your belief in God shouldn't be done in an aggressive or argumentative manner
 - You aren't trying to win a debate

- They have reasons not to believe (that you are willing to hear),
and you have reasons for believing (hopefully they will be willing to hear)
- Both Christianity and Atheism involves Faith
 - Glenn Kreider:
 -  : “To believe that there is a god, to believe there is no god, those are both faith commitments. And we can find common ground there to begin talking about what faith is and how we all live in light of what we believe.”
 - Atheists claim to reject anything not proven by science
 - Science is the systematic study of the structure and behavior of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment.
 - The Bible says that we must accept by faith the fact that God exists
 - Hebrews 11:6
“And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him”
 - Faith is not a bad thing
 - But atheists believe in things by faith
 - Evolution
 - The Big Bang
 - The Multiverse
 - Atheists cannot prove:
 - The Non-Existence of God
 - The Origin of Life: that non-life can produce life
 - The Origin of Purpose: why everything exists
 - That Evolution Is occurring now, that it occurred in the past and will occur In the future
 - Don’t try to prove God’s existence beyond all reasonable doubt. The goal should be more modest: argue that theism (belief in God) is more reasonable than atheism (the rejection of belief in God).

- How we “know” God exists:
 - Belief in God is Intuitive
 - It is significant that studies of the world's cultures show an almost universal belief in a god or gods
 - Belief in God is assumed in the Scriptures (Genesis 1:1)
 - Belief in God is Corroborated by Logical Arguments
 - Ontological Argument
 1. God is “a being than which no greater can be conceived.”
 2. To exist is greater than to not exist,
 3. Therefore the greatest conceivable being must exist.
 4. If God did not exist, then God would not be the greatest conceivable being, and that would contradict the very definition of God.
 - Cosmological Argument
 1. Things exist.
 2. It is possible for those things to not exist.
 3. Whatever has the possibility of non-existence, yet exists, has been caused to exist.
 - Something cannot bring itself into existence since it must exist to bring itself into existence, which is illogical.
 4. There cannot be an infinite number of causes to bring something into existence.
 - An infinite regression of causes ultimately has no initial cause, which means there is no cause of existence.
 - Since the universe exists, it must have a cause.
 5. Therefore, there must be an uncaused cause of all things.
 6. The uncaused cause is God.
 - Objection: If everything needs a cause for its existence, then God needs one also.

- Teleological Argument
 1. Human artifacts are products of intelligent design.
 2. The universe resembles human artifacts.
 3. Therefore the universe is a product of intelligent design.
 4. But the universe is complex and gigantic in comparison to human artifacts.
 5. Therefore, there probably is a powerful and vastly intelligent designer who created the universe.

- Question: Hasn't the theory of evolution shown us how it is possible for all the order in the universe to have arisen by chance? - No
- The Anthropic Principle:
 - All the seemingly arbitrary and unrelated constants in the physical universe have one thing in common— they are precisely the values you need if you want a universe that is capable of producing life.
- The Fine-tuning of the universe
 - Scientists have increasingly become aware that the universe is 'just right' for life. If any one of a number of features of the universe had been even slightly different, life as we know it would be impossible.
 - Atheist Richard Dawkins admitted that the most troubling argument for nonbelievers to counter is the fine-tuning of the universe.
 - Francis Collins:

“To get our universe, with all of its potential for complexities or any kind of

potential for any kind of life form, everything has to be precisely defined on this knife edge of improbability,”

- Various features of the universe are ‘just right’ for the existence of stars, galaxies and life itself:
 - Had they been slightly different the human race could not exist.
 - Had the ratio of the electromagnetic and gravitational forces differed by about 1 part in ten thousand billion billion billion then stars such as the Sun, which are capable of supporting life, could not exist.
 - If the earth were 5% closer to the sun, it would be a greenhouse with temperatures running up to 900 degrees Fahrenheit.
 - If the earth were 20% farther out it would produce carbon dioxide clouds that would freeze the planet.
- In fact, astrobiologists have determined that as many as twenty factors are needed for a planet to sustain complex life.
 - within Galactic Habitable Zone
 - orbiting main sequence G2 dwarf star
 - protected by gas giant planets
 - within Circumstellar Habitable Zone
 - correct mass
 - orbited by large moon
 - magnetic field
 - plate tectonics

- oxygen rich atmosphere
- ratio of liquid water to continents
- terrestrial planet
- moderate rate of rotation
- Moral Argument
 1. Objective Moral Values Exist
 2. God and Objective Morality Are Closely Connected
 3. Non-theistic Ethical Theories Will Be Incomplete and Inadequate
 - The moral argument essentially claims that naturalism does not account for morality.
 - If human beings are simply the product of naturalistic evolution, then we have no foundation for moral obligation and human dignity
- There are answers to their objections
 - Whether it is a scientific, emotional, moral, or other reason for denying God's existence there are answers
 - Ask if they would be willing to discuss them
- Discuss common aspects of human experience—aspects accepted by both atheists and theists.

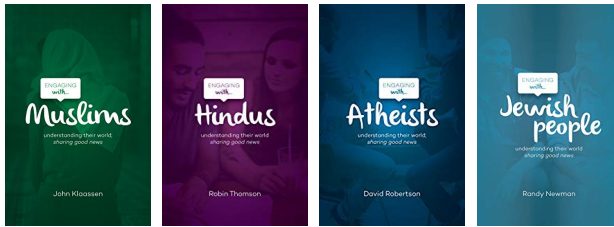
*“When we witness to atheists (or anyone else),
our first responsibility is to listen.*

*Our goal is not to defeat atheists in a debate, but to show
them the glory and beauty of Christ.”*

(David Robertson)

A Few Resources

- Reading
 - Engaging with Series



- Engaging with Hindus (Robin Thomson)
- Engaging with Muslims (John Klaassen)
- Engaging with Jewish People (Randy Newman)
- Engaging with Atheists (David Robertson)
- Neighboring Faiths (Winfried Corduan)
- So What's the Difference? (Fritz Ridenour)
- Between One Faith and Another (Peter Kreeft)
- Seeking Allah, Finding Allah (Nabeel Qureshi)
- Encountering Religious Pluralism (Harold Netland)
- World Religions: A Guide to the Essentials (Robinson and Rodriguez)
- The Problem with Christianity (Barton Priebe)
- All Roads Don't Lead to Heaven (Steven Garofalo)
- Right For You and Not For Me (Steven Garofalo)
- Holman Quick Resource Guide to Apologetics (Doug Powell)
- The Reason for God (Tim Keller)
- Relativism: Feet Firmly Planted in Mid-Air (Francis J Beckwith and Gregory Koukl)
- Faith Comes by Hearing (Christopher Morgan and Robert A Peterson)

- Online Resources
 - North American Mission Board—World Religion Overview
<https://www.namb.net/apologetics-blog/world-religions-overview/>
 - BeThinking.org
<https://www.bethinking.org/other-religions>
 - CARM (Christian Apologetics and Resource Ministry) - World Religions
<https://carm.org/world-religions>
 - Equip.org—World Religions
<https://www.equip.org/world-religions/>
 - BiblicalTraining.org
 - A collection of introductory courses on various religions
 - Dallas Theological Seminary “The Table Podcast”
 - <https://voice.dts.edu/tablepodcast/engaging-world-religions/>
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- Respectfully Engaging World Religions
 - Respectfully Engaging Hinduism
 - Respectfully Engaging Buddhism
 - Respectfully Engaging Sikhism
 - Respectfully Engaging Jainism
 - Respectfully Engaging Shintoism
 - Respectfully Engaging Islam
 - Respectfully Engaging Judaism