



EVANGELISTIC
PRAYER
TEAM

TERM 3

2021



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TERM 3
2021

EPTs gather Christian workers across Australia to encourage one another in our **CONVICTION, CHARACTER, COMPETENCE, and COURAGE** so we all can share Jesus with our colleagues and pray together that God may work in their lives to see Jesus known.

Vision: To reach the world through the workplace with the good news about Jesus.

Aim: 1000 people across Australia meeting Jesus in the pages of the Bible

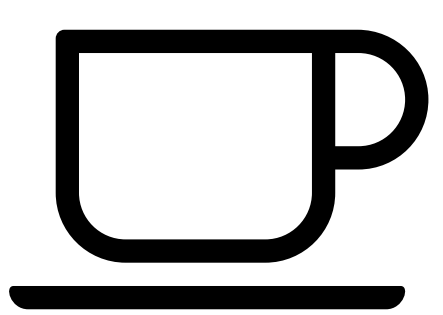


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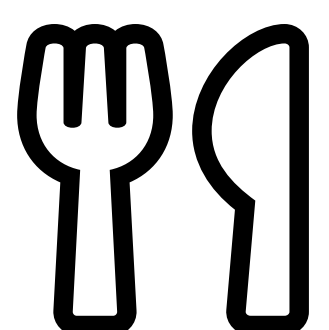
TAKE THE NEXT RELATIONAL STEP

COFFEE



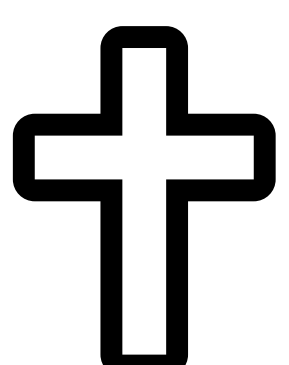
Shared a personal conversation
Knows I'm Christian
Spent social time together

DINNER



I understand their worldview
I've shared the Bible worldview

GOSPEL



Made a clear presentation of gospel
Reading Bible
Become Christian
Joined a good church



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OVERVIEW

Reach the World

Worldviews - World Religions

Hinduism

Buddhism

Sikhism

Islam

Why don't people 'get' the gospel

Suffering for the gospel

Worldviews - Christian Religions

Roman Catholicism

Jehovah's Witnesses

Mormonism (LDS)



REACH THE WORLD

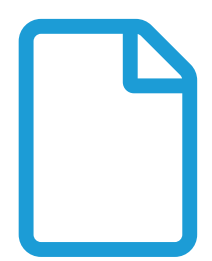


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REACH THE WORLD

Course Overview

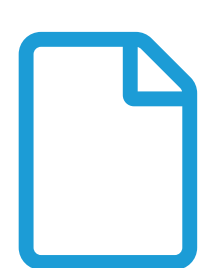


Course Summary

The days when you could go from zero to the gospel in a single conversation are not the norm - keep praying for it, but don't be discouraged by it not happening. ...you need to take the Bible to them." Rico Tice Honest Evangelism

This study looks at why we focus on inviting people to meet Jesus in the pages of the Bible in EPTs as we seek to reach the world through the workplace with the good news of Jesus.

REACH THE WORLD



Lesson Introduction

How would you reach the world with the good news of Jesus?



Big Picture

We aim to reach the world through the workplace with the good news of Jesus by prayerfully seeking to see 1000 people across Australia meeting Jesus in the pages of the Bible.



Bible Passages

While you read – How do people come to a saving faith?

...I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

Romans 1:16

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.

Romans 10:17

But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Titus 3:4-7



Key Truths

There are many possible ways to reach the world, so why do we focus on reading the Bible with our friends and colleagues?

There are 3 reasons:

1. **Theological.** God works to build his kingdom by his life-saving word, through his life-giving Spirit. While God may speak in many different ways, we know he has spoken once for all in his Son, Jesus Christ, the Word of God. We meet Jesus as we read the Bible and God's Spirit enlightens our minds and hearts to the call of the gospel.
2. **Culturally.** Gone is the age where workers trust clergy or theological experts for spiritual matters. Gen X and Y tend to look to practitioners and peers for spiritual matters. They want to see that the Christian life works, and they prefer to listen to people they trust, not "experts". Fewer people are familiar with the Bible; people start further away than ever before – they don't know what they don't know about God.
3. **Relationally.** We have been thinking about our relationships in terms of Coffee (surface level) – Dinner (getting deeper) – Gospel. When we invite someone to read a Gospel with us, it's like inviting someone for coffee on a first date. However, inviting someone to come to our church is the relational equivalent of inviting them to come to meet all the relatives at a family reunion over the weekend – it's a big ask! (particularly if they don't live close).

Consider Rico Tice's words:

Research suggests that when people put their faith in Christ, on average it's taken two years from the point when they came into meaningful contact with a Christian who witnessed to them—and that time period is growing. Witnessing is a long-term commitment to invest in a relationship, to pray tirelessly, and to speak the gospel over and over again, patiently and persistently. It is a journey of gospel conversations. It really does take effort.

And

It's harder and harder to take people to hear the Bible taught; you need to take the Bible to them. People who would never consider stepping into a church will feel far less threatened reading and talking about the Bible with a friend.

Honest Evangelism, p87-88

Thoughts? Questions?



Application

Increasingly, instead of trying to find that knock-out argument, the perfect event, or that amazing book, we're aiming to invite our colleagues to meet Jesus as they read a Gospel with us. We're finding that increasingly people aren't prepared to consider the bigger questions of life upfront. Instead, after reading the Bible for some time, that's when the questions start flowing and the gospel starts to make more sense.

Who could you invite to read a Gospel with you?



Prayer

Take some time. Can you think of three people you could invite to read through a Gospel with you?

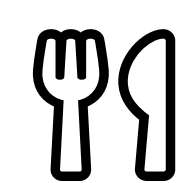
Perhaps you could share those names with the rest of the team and pray for them together. Pray for opportunities to read a Gospel with those people.

Remember

COFFEE



DINNER



GOSPEL



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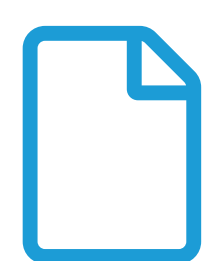
WORLDVIEWS: WORLD RELIGIONS



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WORLDVIEWS: WORLD RELIGIONS **Course Overview**



Course Summary

Roughly half of the world's population are represented by these 4 religious beliefs. In Australia, these represent an increasing proportion of our population - about 1 in 12 Australians hold one of these worldviews.

These religions represent worldviews quite foreign to a Western outlook. The focus of these studies is to understand their worldview, and develop some questions that we could ask to explore their worldview.



Course and Lesson Structure

Lessons

1: Hinduism

2: Buddhism

3: Sikhism

4: Islam

Each of these 4 lessons examines the worldview of the millions of people who believe in one of these world religions that are quite different to Christianity. You may choose to only do a couple of these studies - feel free to do all 4. However, remember the purpose is to understand their worldviews in order to ask good questions - not to start arguments!



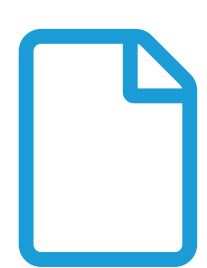
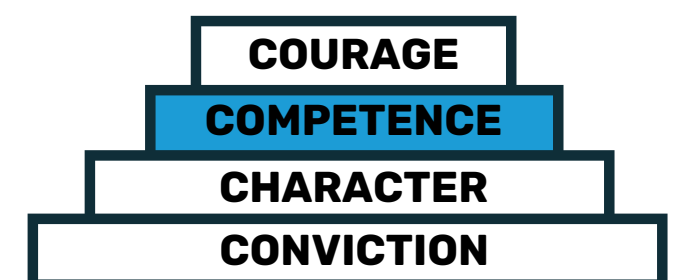
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WORLDVIEWS: WORLD RELIGIONS **Lesson 1: Hinduism**



Lesson Introduction

The world's third largest religion, and the basis for two of the other four in the big five, Hinduism is worth spending some time understanding. The last census had Hinduism as the fastest growing religion in Australia. If you don't know a Hindu believer now, chances are you may meet one soon.



Big Picture

Hinduism is the belief that behind everything in existence is the great spirit, Brahman - an impersonal, ultimate reality to which we must reunite by escaping the endless cycle of rebirth.



Key Truths

- Hinduism is an ancient religion that arose in a collectivist, Eastern worldview.
- The problem in Hinduism is our painful bondage to our cyclical, physical, individual existence.
- At its core, Hinduism believes behind everything in existence, is the great spirit, Brahman - an impersonal, ultimate reality.
- Hinduism is the means to escape the endless cycle of rebirth (Samsara) and achieve oneness in Brahman, becoming what we once were - like a spark returning to the flame. This is true existence - (called *Moksha*).
- The means of escape this cycle seek to deal with the impact of Karma - the fruit of our actions - good or bad - that attach to our soul trapping us in the physical realm.



Key Truths (cont)

- There are three main ways of observing Hinduism:
 - Dharma - The laws and duties associated with your caste (position in society). These actions must be performed with detachment, with no particular outcome in mind.
 - Asceticism - A life of strict self-denial and devotion on the Vedas (scriptures).
 - Devotion - A life lived in service of one of the many manifestations of Brahman, such as Vishnu or Siva.



Explore Worldview

Enter	What is their mission?	We need to escape this endless cycle of rebirth and become one with Brahman - the univesal, impersonal spirit.
	Who are the bad guys?	Our actions attach karma to our souls which traps us in this painful, physical existence.
	Who are the good guys?	We need to escape this endless cycle of rebirth and become one with Brahman - the univesal, impersonal spirit.
	Why attractive?	Hinduism provides a clear picture of where I stand in the universe, karma explains existence of evil, and there are a number of different paths to achieve Moksha or freedom from rebirth
Challenge	What's missing?	Karma is an oppressive idea that keeps us from loving people - they are getting their just deserts after all. Doing good is a duty, absent of compassion.
	What's clashing?	Samsara (rebirth) is axiomatic and foundational to Hinduism, but it is unverifiable. If untrue, Hinduism is false, meaningless and cruel. Which path should I take? How do I know it works?
Fulfill	How is Jesus the answer?	In Jesus, God has spoken in time and space, we can know him and relate to him. Wouldn't he be worth listening to? The good news of Jesus brings all people together and enables us to love anyone and everyone.



Application

The point of growing our understanding of Hinduism, is to enter their worldview, help them find a point of challenge, and to suggest how Jesus is the answer to their deepest yearning. And to seek an opportunity to invite them to meet Jesus in the pages of the Bible.

So, what questions could you ask a Hindu to explore their worldview?



Prayer

Pray for a deeper understanding of Hinduism so we can go deeper with our Hindu friends and colleagues.

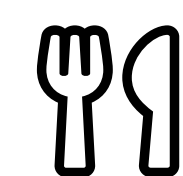
Pray for an opportunity to share Jesus with a Hindu friend or colleague.

Remember

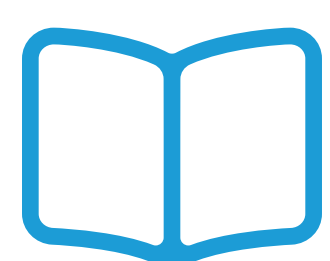
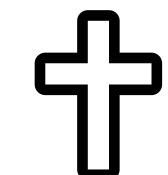
COFFEE



DINNER



GOSPEL



Further Reading

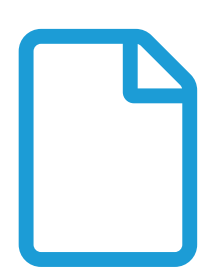
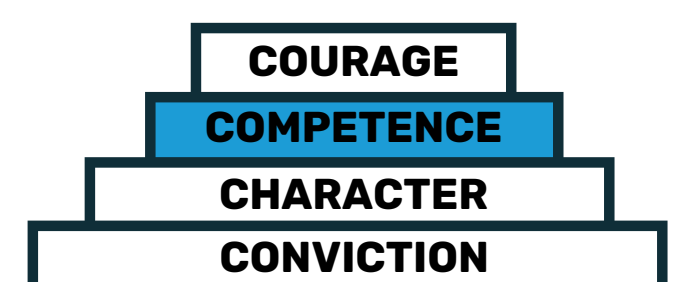
A Spectators Guide to World Religions by John Dickson

The Heart of Hinduism website - hinduism.iskcon.org



WORLDVIEWS: WORLD RELIGIONS

Lesson 2: Buddhism



Lesson Introduction

Buddhism is the world's fourth largest religion, one of the fastest growing religions in Australia, and has been one of the religions of choice for Western people seeking an alternative to the religion in which they were raised.



Big Picture

Buddhism is the answer to the problem of suffering by denying the 'self', and its attachment to the physical world and the cravings this produces. Buddhism seeks true bliss through self-detachment and release into Nirvana.



Key Truths

- Buddhism arose in India when Siddhartha Gautama (a secluded prince) was suddenly exposed to suffering and discovered Hinduism had no viable answers. Gautama meditated towards a solution and, in a moment of enlightenment, developed the "middle path" we call Buddhism. (and he is now better known as Buddha)
- Buddhism teaches 4 Noble Truths:
 1. Life is suffering
 2. Suffering is due to our belief in the "self". This belief leads to cravings in life which are never truly satisfied. As we live in ignorance of how the world truly is, we fall victim to its trappings.
 3. Suffering is ended if we can give up on the concept of self, and the craving that ensues. Once we do that, we achieve enlightenment, are free from suffering and the eternal cycle of birth and rebirth



Key Truths (cont)

4. You end suffering and gain enlightenment by following the Noble Eightfold Path:

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| A. Right Understanding | E. Right Livelihood (vocation) |
| B. Right Attitude | F. Right Effort (thought life) |
| C. Right Speech | G. Right Mindfulness (aware of place in the universe) |
| D. Right Action | H. Right Concentration (meditation) |

Understanding Buddhism requires coming to terms with its fundamental understanding of the universe, that is, there is no universal spirit or god, or soul behind our physical form; there is no self. The "self" is nothing more than the accumulation of thoughts and sensory experience impacted by earlier causes. The "self" is an eddy in the wind of the universe.

As we travel through life we accumulate *karma* based on the things we do and think. *Karma* determines our destination in the next life, but the goal in Buddhism is not a better rebirth, instead it's to achieve enlightenment and escape the cycle of rebirth and enter *Nirvana* - the complete release from suffering into nothingness (or everythingness)



Explore Worldview

Enter

What is their mission?	Buddhism is an answer to the suffering we experience in life.
Who are the bad guys?	Suffering is caused by the attachment to the concept of self and ignorance to the illusion of the self.
Who are the good guys?	The Four Noble Truths, and anyone who follows them, living the Noble Eightfold Path. and anyone who teaches them.
Why attractive?	Buddhism promises an end to suffering and a way to follow that will get us there.

Note: there are 2 main streams of Buddhism– traditional (atheistic) Buddhism (*Theravada*) and *Mahayana* which developed later and holds that Buddha became divine (and we can too) and believes in many gods.

 **Explore Worldview (cont)**

Challenge	What's missing?	If the self is an illusion, what is the inherent worth of a person? why is it such a persistent illusion? Are there any genuine joys to be experienced?
	What's clashing?	The Noble Eightfold Path is burdensome and difficult to follow. How can we know if it will deliver us from suffering? When do we know if we have achieved enlightenment?
Fulfill	How is Jesus the answer?	"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30

 **Application**

The point of growing our understanding of Buddhism, is to enter their worldview, help them find a point of challenge, and to suggest how Jesus is the answer to their deepest yearning. And to seek an opportunity to invite them to meet Jesus in the pages of the Bible.

So, what questions could you ask a Buddhist to explore their worldview?

 **Prayer**

Pray for a deeper understanding of Buddhism so we can go deeper with our Buddhist friends and colleagues.

Pray for an opportunity to share Jesus with a Buddhist friend or colleague.

 **Further Reading**

A Spectators Guide to World Religions by John Dickson

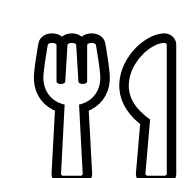
Buddha Dharma Education Association website - buddhanet.net

Remember

COFFEE



DINNER



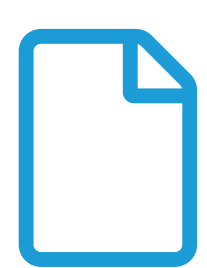
GOSPEL





WORLDVIEWS: WORLD RELIGIONS

Lesson 3: Sikhism



Lesson Introduction

Sikhism is the fifth largest religion in the world and the youngest of these four. Sikhism arose in the Punjab region of India, which is directly adjacent to Pakistan. It arose in reaction to both Hinduism and Islam which existed in the area.

Sikhism is contemplative and practical, with a focus on cleanliness and hospitality.



Big Picture

Sikhism believes in one God and that our goal is to merge with him and thus escape the illusion of the physical world and the trap of constant reincarnation.



Key Truths

- There is only one God. All religions seek to worship this one God, but only Sikhism truly reveals him. God has no form or shape and can not take a form or a shape.
- Reality is an illusion; ultimate reality is God.
- The soul goes through cycles of rebirth until it reaches its human form, in which form its goal is to merge with God.
- We remerge with God by remembering God, focusing upon him and his name(s) and living virtuously as a community member. Release from the cycle of reincarnation is granted by grace (upon evidence of remembrance of God and the right life).
- Grace is the experience of the divine that helps attune one to God.



Key Truths (cont)

- Humanity struggles with five weaknesses, the 'Five thieves' - lust, anger, greed, attachment, and ego. They rob us of God consciousness.
- The authority of truth in Sikhism is in the succession of ten Gurus, now represented by the perpetual Guru Granth Sahib (their collection of holy scriptures).



Explore Worldview

Enter	What is their mission?	We need to escape this endless cycle of rebirth and merge with the one true God.
	Who are the bad guys?	We are trapped in the seduction of the physical world and the five thieves. We are trapped because we have forgotten God, who is beyond knowing.
	Who are the good guys?	The Gurus have revealed God to us by grace. They help us remember God, avoid sin, be devoted to the name, and live honestly.
	Why attractive?	Sikhism provides a coherent body of beliefs that explain our world. It promises to reconnect us to God. It also seems accepting of other beliefs - which just aren't as enlightened as the Gurus are. Sikhs emphasise right living.
Challenge	What's missing?	Sikhism offers no certainty. How do I know I have lived a good enough life? How can I be sure the Gurus are right about God?
	What's clashing?	If a Sikh makes a mistake and needs to be reborn is this a chance to get it right next time, or is it a disaster? How does this motivate me to change my life?
Fulfill	How is Jesus the answer?	Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, ²⁸ so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. Hebrews 9:27-28



Application

The point of growing our understanding of Sikhism, is to enter their worldview, help them find a point of challenge, and to suggest how Jesus is the answer to their deepest yearning. And to seek an opportunity to invite them to meet Jesus in the pages of the Bible.

So, what questions could you ask a Sikh to explore their worldview?



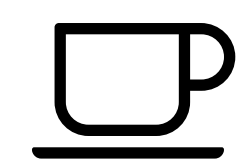
Prayer

Pray for a deeper understanding of Sikhism so we can go deeper with our Sikh friends and colleagues.

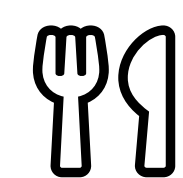
Pray for an opportunity to share Jesus with a Sikh friend or colleague.

Remember

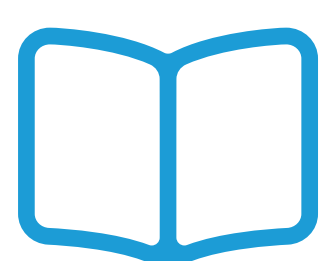
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DINNER



GOSPEL



Further Reading

Sikhs.org website



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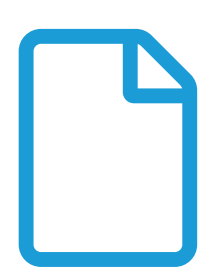
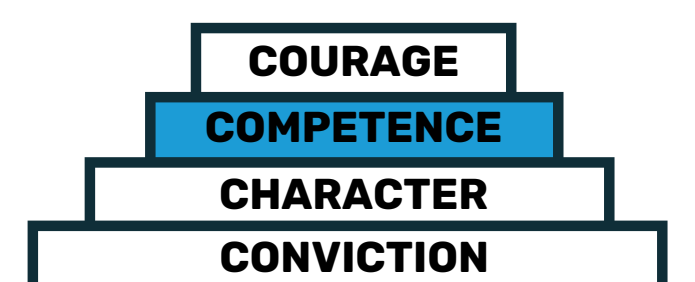
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WORLDVIEWS: WORLD RELIGIONS

Lesson 4: Islam



Lesson Introduction

Islam is the world's second largest religion, and one of the more prominent religions in our media. Islam arose in 7th Century, polytheistic Arabia.



Big Picture

Islam is the final message from God through his final prophet, Muhammad. Islam is about submission to the one God, and faith in his messenger.



Key Truths

- Islam's central belief is the *Shahada* - "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is His messenger." Converting to Islam involves declaring the *Shahada*.
- Islam can be summarised in the Five Pillars of Islam:
 - *Shahada*
 - *Salat* - daily prayers
 - *Zakat* - alms for the poor
 - *Sawm* - fasting for Ramadan
 - *Hajj* - pilgrimage to Mecca
- Muhammad is God's final messenger and seals all that come before, including the prophets, Jesus and his apostles.
- The message Muhammad reveals in the Quran - including the exact Arabic words - is God's word. (a translation doesn't cut it)



Key Truths

- Muhammad's life, as recorded in the *Hadiths* is the perfect life lived and so should be imitated (even down to facial hair and clothing). Thus, the *Hadiths* are important and authoritative over a Muslim's life. The ability to derive ones lineage to Muhammad also adds authority and importance.
- There are three main varieties of Islam:
 - *Sunni* - 80% of the world's Muslims
 - *Shi'ite* - 15% of the world's Muslims (but the majority in Iran and Iraq)
 - *Sufi* - a mystic form of Islam



Explore Worldview

Enter	What is their mission?	People are a creature of God whose purpose is to give praise to God, but we forget Allah and disobey him. We need to re-submit to Allah's rule.
	Who are the bad guys?	All who propagate the false religions that declare more than one God, Allah. (including the Trinity [Allah, Jesus, Mary] or that Jesus was crucified)
	Who are the good guys?	Muhammad is the hero of Islam, all who live in line with his life and teaching.
	Why attractive?	Islam very quickly took over much of the known world, conquering many nations. In an honour/shame culture this gives much explanatory power. A devout Muslim should live peaceably. Islam guards against vice and abuse.
Challenge	What's missing?	Islam leans heavily on a strict external system of laws (Sharia) to keep obedience. This doesn't impact the heart that yearns for sin.
	What's clashing?	In those countries where Sharia has been strictly enforced, it has tended to result in backlash and rejection. A harsh crackdown on vice, without changing the heart, results in rebellion. Crime continues in countries with Sharia law.
Fulfill	How is Jesus the answer?	Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence. Colossians 2:23



Application

The point of growing our understanding of Islam, is to enter their worldview, help them find a point of challenge, and to suggest how Jesus is the answer to their deepest yearning. And to seek an opportunity to invite them to meet Jesus in the pages of the Bible.

So, what questions could you ask a Muslim to explore their worldview?



Prayer

Pray for a deeper understanding of Islam so we can go deeper with our Muslim friends and colleagues.

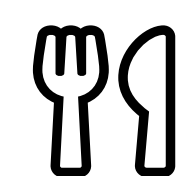
Pray for an opportunity to share Jesus with a Muslim friend or colleague.

Remember

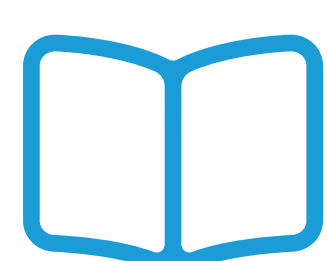
COFFEE



DINNER



GOSPEL



Further Reading

A Spectators Guide to World Religions by John Dickson

Where to Start with Islam by Sam Green

Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus: A Devout Muslim Encounters Christianity by Nabeel Qureshi



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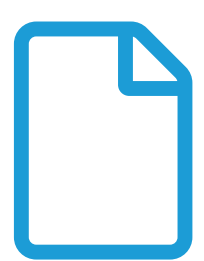
WHY DON'T PEOPLE GET THE GOSPEL



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WHY DON'T PEOPLE GET THE GOSPEL?



Lesson Introduction

Do you know people who are wonderful, honest, and kind - who live like Christians but aren't?

Do you know people who are usually mild, easy-going people - but who get suddenly agitated by the mention of Jesus?

Ever wondered why?



Big Picture

We live in a world blinded to God's gospel by the spiritual forces pitted against God, only God can make his light shine in our hearts so we see Jesus clearly.



Bible Passage

While you read – Why is the gospel received or rejected?

Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. ² Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. ³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:1-6



Key Truths

1. The gospel of Jesus is veiled to those who are perishing. The gospel isn't just unclear or confusing for some people; they are actually blind to its truth.
2. People are blind to the gospel because the god of this age has blinded their minds. There are spiritual forces actively opposed to people seeing Jesus and his magnificence.
3. People don't come to Jesus morally neutral; they are biased against Jesus. If we understand this, we won't be surprised by people's responses.
4. As we seek to share Jesus with our colleagues, we can be confident that God will open blind eyes. If God can cause light to shine in darkness on the first day of creation, how much more can he cause light to shine in our hearts. If he has done it for us, he can do it for our colleagues.

Thoughts? Questions?



Application

If blind eyes are to see, it's going to take an act of God. So too, when it comes to spiritual blindness, only God can help people see Jesus clearly – not our cleverness, or strategies, or persuasiveness.

As we help people meet Jesus in the pages of the Bible, we do so trusting that God will graciously drop the veil from some people's eyes. We hope that God will help people see Christ for who he is, as everyone will one day see him when he returns in glory. But our hope is that it will happen now, rather than when it's too late.

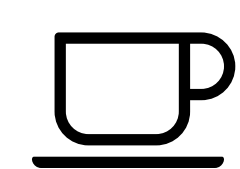


Prayer

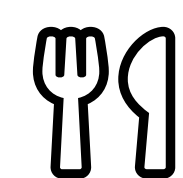
Pray that God will allow our colleagues and friends to see Jesus truly as they read a gospel with us.

Remember

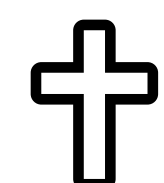
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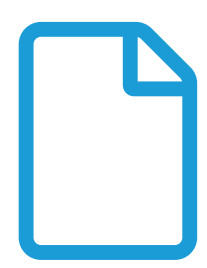
SUFFERING FOR THE GOSPEL



EVANGELISTIC
PRAYER
TEAM



SUFFERING FOR THE GOSPEL



Lesson Introduction

How do people around you seek joy?



Big Picture

Trials are an opportunity to build spiritual muscle so we can be complete as Christians..



Bible Passage

While you read – What are the point of trials in life?

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds,
³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let
perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking
anything.*

James 1:2-4



Key Truths

1. We face trials of many kinds, including those which test our faith.
2. Trials are a chance to develop perseverance and help us overcome challenges to our faith by building spiritual muscle.
3. We only become mature and complete as Christians once God has worked on us as we persevere through trials.

Thoughts? Questions?



Application

What trials are you facing at the moment?

How does it change your outlook if you see trials no longer as a threat, but as an opportunity to build spiritual muscle so we can be mature as a Christian?



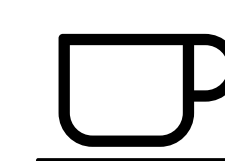
Prayer

Pray for a positive outlook as trials come in the workplace.

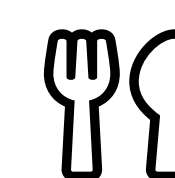
Pray that you would be a non-anxious presence in the face of trials when they come.

Remember

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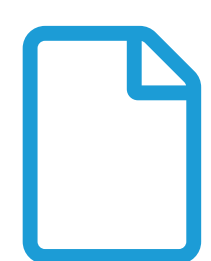
WORLDVIEWS: CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS



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WORLDVIEWS: CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS **Course Overview**



Course Summary

As we get to know other workers we may discover, with joy, there are people who think very similarly to us - they may even identify as Christian, or say they go to church. But then you notice some differences, the way they behave, their language, and then you learn - they're Catholic, or a Jehovah's Witness, or a Latter Day Saint.

What's the difference? Does it matter? These studies serve as a starting point to begin to explore what your friend believes.



Course and Lesson Structure

Lessons

1: Roman Catholicism

2: Jehovahs Witnesses

3: Mormonism (Latter Day Saints)

Each of these 3 lessons examines the worldview of the millions of people who believe in one of the Christian religions that are subtly, but importantly, different to orthodox Christianity. You may choose to only do a couple of these studies - feel free to do all 3. However, remember the purpose is to understand their worldviews in order to ask good questions - not to start arguments!



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Photo from JW.org

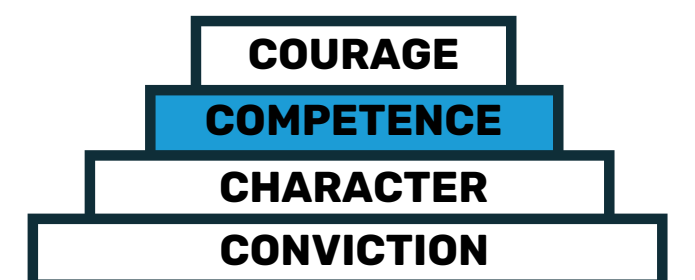
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WORLDVIEWS: CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

Lesson 1: Roman Catholicism



Lesson Introduction

Roman Catholics believe they belong to the original church that Jesus established under St. Peter. Every other pope is a successor of Peter, and so another apostle of Jesus. All other churches have broken off from the one, true Catholic Church.



Big Picture

"We believe in one holy, Catholic and apostolic church". Catholics believe they belong to the only true church that Jesus established. God's presence is experienced in the sacraments it administers through Jesus' living representatives on earth - the pope and his priests.



Key Truths

- Many beliefs of the Roman Catholic church are also held by Christians. They affirm the Nicene, Athanasian, and Apostles creeds (though what they mean by the words is not always the same).
- Often Catholics mean very different things while using the same words - resulting in a very different religious system.
- Catholics believe in the Trinity (though Mary can often take on attributes we would reserve for God (Father, Son, and Spirit)).
- Catholics believe we are sinners (though not so bad that we cannot contribute something to our salvation)
- Catholics believe in the authority of the Bible (it's God's word - but not his only word)



Key Truths (cont)

- Perhaps the biggest area of difference is how God saves us. While they agree we need Jesus to save us, they disagree about our role in our salvation, and how the Spirit works in our lives.
- Perhaps you have heard about the role of Faith and Works as a historical major difference that led to the Reformation. While true, you may find modern Catholics affirm that we are saved by faith alone, and works must follow faith. (while having a different understanding of what faith and works mean).

There are 3 key aspects to understanding Roman Catholic belief:

1. Catholics are saved by **BELONGING** to the Roman Catholic Church. Being baptised and belonging to the Catholic church is very important to Catholics - almost all are baptised as infants. Knowing God is about belonging to his only true church. Catholics don't just go to church, once baptised they **ARE** Catholic.
2. Catholics experience God **PHYSICALLY** in the sacraments of the Catholic church. The death of Jesus created a well-spring of grace - spiritual power that enables to live Christian lives. Grace is distributed through sacraments, administered by the church's agents - priests. This is a physical experience; the water of baptism washes away our sin; in the Eucharist you eat the real body of Jesus - becoming physically and spiritually one with him. The local priest forgives your sins.
3. The grace of God is administered via a mediator - the **AUTHORITY** structures of the church. Mary represents the church and is our means to Jesus, who is our means to God. The church is represented by the authority on earth - the pope. And the pope's authority is mediated locally by the parish priests (through the chain of cardinals, archbishops, and local bishop). The Bible is also an important authority in the Catholic church.



Explore Worldview

Enter	What is their mission?	Catholic means universal, and so their mission is to unite the world under Roman Catholicism with God.
	Who are the bad guys?	Anyone who stands opposed to the mission of the church are "Anti-Catholic". So sometimes Protestants, but often governments or organisations that limit or work against it.
	Who are the good guys?	Catholics, priests - any representative of the Catholic church, especially saints.
	Why attractive?	You belong to the church Jesus initiated. Catholicism is historical, intellectually stimulating, boasts great beauty, art, and wealth. It provides clear ways to experience forgiveness and God physically in the eucharist.
Challenge	What's missing?	A Catholic can never be sure they are in a state of grace - right with God. So they have no assurance of heaven, nor a direct and personal relationship with God based on his word and spirit.
	What's clashing?	There are two major driving forces within the Catholic church that work against one another - the desire for inclusion, and the exclusive claim of the church. The Catholic church is often keen to be involved in ecumenical movements and seeks to re-unite and bring fullness to the church, but it is the only true church of Jesus and salvation is found only in the Catholic church. In the end, unity is about bringing people into the structures of the Catholic church.
Fulfill	How is Jesus the answer?	The Catholic church offers a structure towards Jesus - but Jesus is often obscured by the edifice. A way to Jesus by his word, the Bible - an authority we both share - may be very attractive to a Catholic. So reading a Gospel with Catholics, helping them to see Jesus clearly, could be life-changing.



Application

Remember, this is not an exercise in finding points to argue over, but to provide context to begin exploring with Catholics what they believe.

So, what questions could you ask a Catholic to explore their worldview?



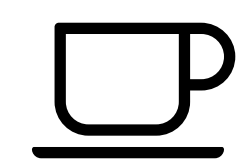
Prayer

Pray for a deeper understanding of Roman Catholicism so we can go deeper with our Catholic friends and colleagues.

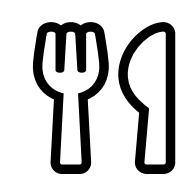
Pray for an opportunity to read through a Gospel with a Catholic friend.

Remember

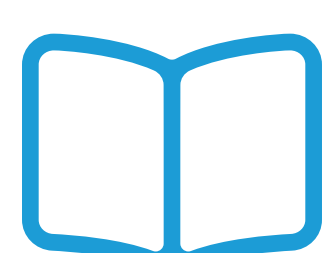
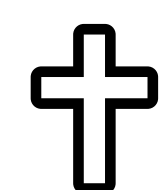
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Further Reading

Nothing in my Hand I Bring by Ray Galea

The Road Once Travelled by Mark Gilbert

Stepping Out in Faith edited by Mark Gilbert

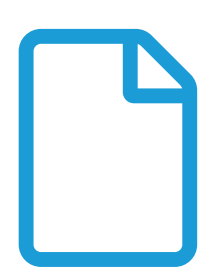
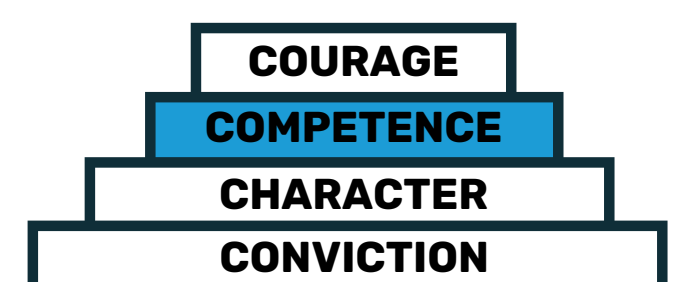


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WORLDVIEWS: CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

Lesson 2: Jehovah's Witnesses



Lesson Introduction

Jehovah's Witnesses began with Charles Taze Russell in 1874. They predicted the return of Christ in 1874 and 1914. Jehovah's witnesses seek to read the Bible without any attention to what believers have understood in the history of the church - but with the added input from the Watchtower magazine.



Big Picture

Jehovah's Witnesses arose out of a doomsday cult based on peculiar readings of the Bible. In their eyes they represent a return to the beliefs of the early church before it was obscured by human traditions and philosophy.



Key Truths

- Jehovah's Witnesses seek to go back to a plain understanding of the Bible, without attention to what others have believed in the history of the church, because the church's teaching has been obscured by human traditions and philosophy.
- They believe:
 - There is one God and his personal name is Jehovah. He wants us to call him by his name.
 - The Bible is God's inspired message to humans.
 - Jesus is not God. The Trinity is not mentioned in the Bible. Jesus was a spirit creature of heaven before he was born.



Key Truths (cont)

- The kingdom of God is a real government in heaven that will replace all human governments following armageddon. Jesus is the king of God's kingdom and he returned spiritually in 1914 to establish his rule on earth. (So we must not align with any earthly political movement)
- Jesus' "ransom sacrifice" delivers us from sin and death if we exercise faith in Jesus, repent, change our life, and get baptised. Works prove our faith is alive, salvation isn't earned. (Also, Jesus died on a stake, not a cross)
- Heaven is a spiritual realm where God, Jesus, and faithful angels reside. 144,000 people will be (spiritually) resurrected to life in heaven to rule with Jesus. Earth is the rest of humanity's eternal home, God blesses obedient people with perfect, everlasting life in a perfect, paradise on Earth.
- Thus, there are two resurrections - a spiritual one for those going to heaven (including Jesus), and a physical one for those staying on Earth. But, Jesus can take on a physical form to visit Earth, such as when he took a body with wound marks to bolster Thomas' faith.
- Evil is the result of angelic rebellion, where Satan persuaded humans to join in his rebellion.
- There is no hell. After resurrection, those who refuse to learn God's ways are destroyed forever.



Explore Worldview

Enter

What is their mission?	A Jehovah's Witness is a member of God's kingdom and seek to grow that kingdom through witnessing.
Who are the bad guys?	Satan and his angels, Christians and those who teach false religion, those who oppose God.
Who are the good guys?	Jehovah's Witnesses, the 144,000, Jesus and the angels.
Why attractive?	It is a conservative, well-organised, defined system of belief that seems to appeal particularly to the previously churched.

 **Explore Worldview (cont)**

Challenge	What's missing?	Jesus is a spiritual being - like an angel - made human. He is God's instrument of creation and redemption, but he isn't divine. He is worth a bit more than an ordinary human, but certainly not of infinite worth. If Jesus is a third party between humans and God, his death on our behalf is an unjust, unfair convenience.
	What's clashing?	Jehovah's Witnesses short circuit 2000 years of church history and try to connect directly to a certain reading of the Bible. However, there is now over 100 years of Watchtower teaching, is this similarly a product of human philosophy? The idea of a physical and spiritual resurrection doesn't square with the Bible's expectation of physical resurrection. (ie. Thomas seems to have been fooled by Jesus to boost his faith - much like Jesus' return in 1914 was spiritual/secret)
Fulfill	How is Jesus the answer?	If a Jehovah's Witness trusts only in the authority of the Bible, as they claim, they may agree to read the Bible with us. While they may be more used to reading topically with notes, reading through a Gospel (from start to finish), letting the word speak for itself may be a good strategy.

 **Application**

Remember, this is not an exercise in finding points to argue over, but to provide context to begin exploring with Jehovah's Witnesses what they believe.

So, what questions could you ask a Jehovah's Witness to explore their worldview?

 **Prayer**

Pray for an opportunity to go deeper with a Jehovah's Witness friend or colleague.

Pray for an opportunity to read through a Gospel with a Jehovah's Witness friend.

Remember

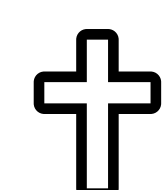
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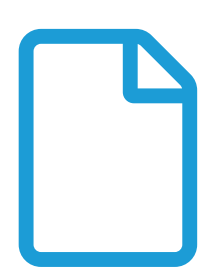
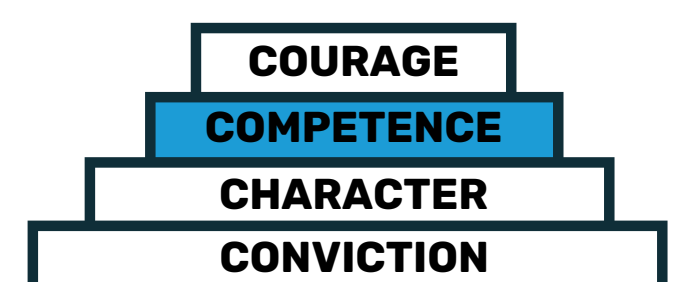
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WORLDVIEWS: CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

Lesson 3: Mormonism



Lesson Introduction

Joseph Smith was unsure which church to join, so he asked God to reveal to him the true church, God the Father and Jesus Christ appeared to him and told him all churches were apostate. Then the angel Moroni directed him to gold plates and other relics - the translation of which became the Book of Mormon. He re-established Jesus' church and the priesthood.



Big Picture

The gospel of Jesus Christ was lost and the church fell into apostacy until God called his prophet, Joseph Smith and delivered him new Scriptures via and angel - Moroni. Smith re-established the lost gospel and the church of Jesus Christ and Latter-Day Saints.



Key Truths

- The church fell into apostacy following the death of the apostles. The calling of Joseph Smith as prophet and priest re-established Jesus' church and his gospel.
- God reveals his truth directly to individuals as they diligently ask him to reveal it, but also through revelations of modern day leaders and prophets. Key to becoming a LDS believer is reading the Book of Mormon and *earnestly* asking God to reveal that it is true. The truth of the Book of Mormon is not determined by reason, but by whatever experience or sign God may give the earnest seeker.
- Latter-Day Saints (or LDS, what Mormons prefer to call themselves) believe not because of solid, rational proof - much of its story is unverifiable, and without historical basis - HOWEVER, these are matters of (blind) faith - a chance to exercise one's faith. The experience of God's confirmation of truth is the basis of faith moving forward.



Key Truths (cont)

- LDS beliefs share many Christian concepts and words - but what they mean can be very different:
 - Trinity is not about one God in three persons - Father, Son, and Spirit. LDS doctrine prefers to speak of the Godhead - who are three, separate, physical beings - one in love, purpose, and will.
 - God the Father was once like us, he has a human-like body, but is now glorified - and we can become like him in glorified reality.
 - The atonement of Christ saves all of God's children (except the sons of perdition), the atonement is applied to us in as far as we repent and keep God's commandments.
 - We have a pre-mortal life where we lived as children of God, the atonement allows us to return to the Father's presence. Mortal life (and sin) is essential for us to learn and grow, but we need atonement to re-unite us to God the Father.
 - Our eternal life is determined by our obedience to four covenants and ordinances of the church: Baptism and confirmation; receiving the priesthood of Melchizedek (for men); endowment in the temple (including wearing temple garments); and sealing (or temple marriage). Families are sealed together eternally in this way and so if they remain faithful are worthy of the highest of three heavenly kingdoms. (these ordinances can be performed on behalf of others, or even for the dead).



Explore Worldview

Enter	What is their mission?	The church of Jesus Christ and Latter-Day Saints seek to see all come to the full realisation of God's plan of salvation through his restored church.
	Who are the bad guys?	Those who by their craftiness delude others away from the truth.
	Who are the good guys?	Those who obey the teaching of the church and of Jesus, and his prophets. Joseph Smith, and the presidents of the LDS church.
	Why attractive?	LDS teaching provides a tight system of belief, and a strong family-oriented community. It is a highly experiential religion.

 **Explore Worldview (cont)**

Challenge	What's missing?	LDS teaching is a legalistic religion that robs grace of its power. God is just a glorified human, Jesus' atonement provides no effective change. LDS doctrine is intellectually anemic, instead it is based on an experience of 'revelation' that must be sought earnestly - which creates a confirmation bias.
	What's clashing?	LDS teaching is based on the fanciful imagination of a 19th Century charlatan who created a cult complete with polygamy and violence (he was killed in a gun fight with a mob while in prison on remand, charged with treason). There is no material evidence of the Book of Mormon's origins, nor of the lives of ancient Israelite lives in North America - it is a matter of blind faith.
Fulfill	How is Jesus the answer?	Jesus' death on the cross in our place does not just open a door through which we may find salvation - we have assurance of salvation. Most LDS apologetics and beliefs are designed to convince Christians to also adopt their beliefs as a fuller understanding. There is little to be gained by arguing the points - it isn't a rational belief system! However, as they believe the Bible is authoritative, it may be helpful to invite a LDS believer to read through a Gospel with you.

 **Application**

Remember, this is not an exercise in finding points to argue over, but to provide context to begin exploring with Mormon friends and colleagues what they believe.

So, what questions could you ask an LDS believer to explore their worldview?

 **Prayer**

Pray for an opportunity to go deeper with a Mormon friend or colleague.

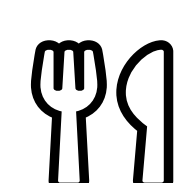
Pray for an opportunity to read through a Gospel with an LDS friend.

Remember

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