



# WORLDVIEWS: WORLD RELIGIONS



EVANGELISTIC  
**PRAYER**  
TEAM



# 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](http://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 persistant 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. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> 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, <sup>28</sup> 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

**COFFEE**



**DINNER**



**GOSPEL**



## Further Reading

*Sikhs.org* website



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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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