

EVANGELISTIC  
**PRAYER**  
TEAMS

**QUARTER 4**  
**2024**



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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 to pray for each other that God may work in their lives to see Jesus known.

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

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

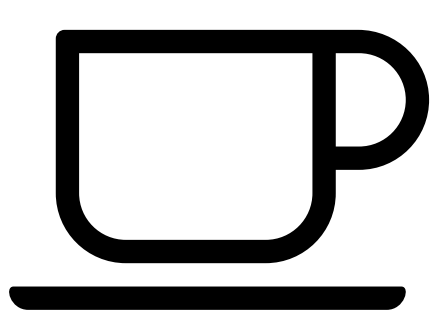


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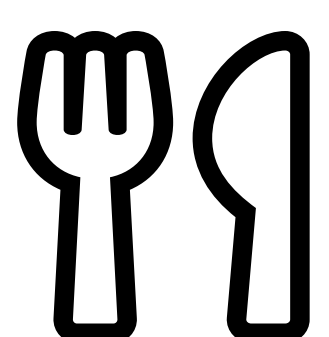
## **TAKE THE NEXT RELATIONAL STEP**

### **COFFEE**



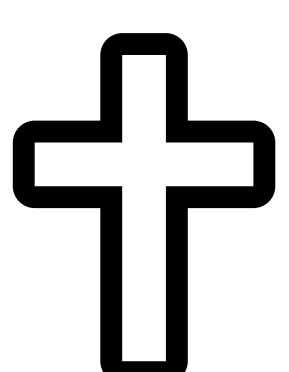
Shared a personal conversation  
Knows I'm Christian  
Spent social time together

### **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**

**WORLDVIEW: CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS**

**A GENEROUS MEASURE**

**WORLDVIEW: WORLD RELIGIONS**

**REFLECTION**



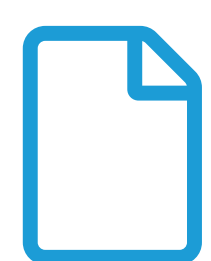
# WORLDVIEWS: CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS



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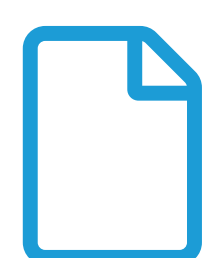
# WORLDVIEWS: CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS **Course Overview**



## **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 Orthodox, 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: Eastern Orthodox**
- 3: Jehovahs Witnesses**
- 4: Mormonism (Latter Day Saints)**

Each of these 4 lessons examines the worldview of the millions of people who believe in one of the Christian religions that are subtly, but importantly, different to Protestant Christianity. These studies are longer than usual. You may choose to only do a couple of these studies, spread them out over a couple of weeks - but feel free to do them all. However, remember the purpose is to understand their worldviews in order to ask good questions - not to start arguments!



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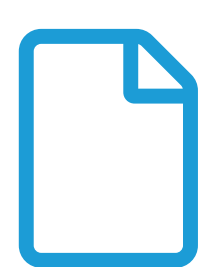
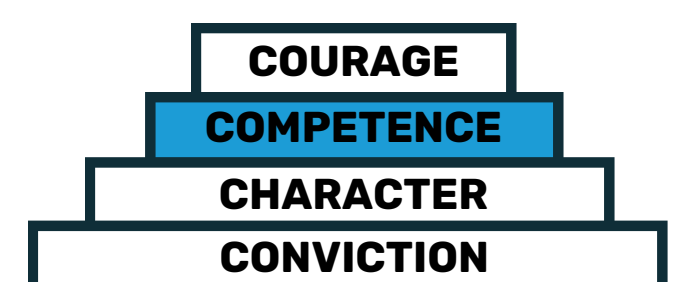
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## WORLDVIEWS: CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS 1: Roman Catholicism



### 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?



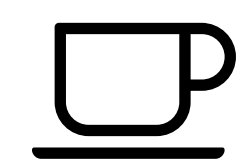
## Prayer

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

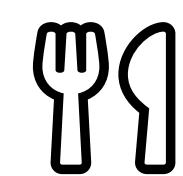
Pray for an opportunity to read through a Gospel with a Catholic friend.

## Remember

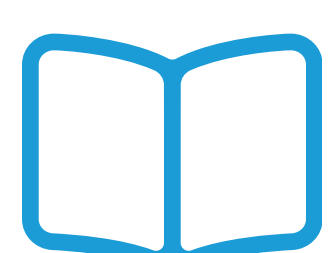
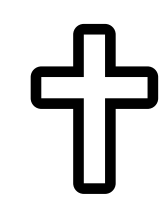
**COFFEE**



**DINNER**



**GOSPEL**



## Further Reading

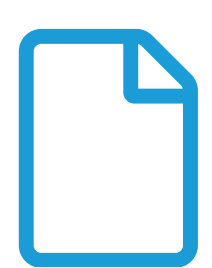
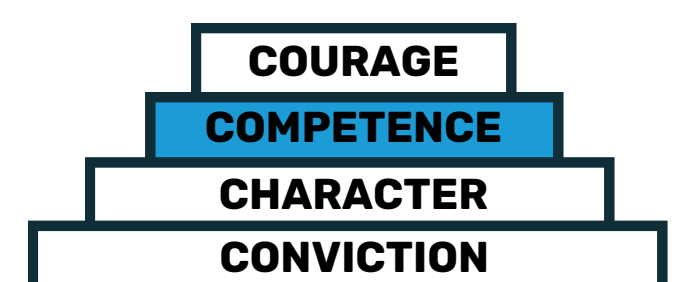
*Nothing in my Hand I Bring* by Ray Galea

*The Road Once Travelled* by Mark Gilbert

*Stepping Out in Faith* edited by Mark Gilbert



## WORLDVIEWS: CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS 2: Eastern Orthodox



### Introduction

Protestant Christians have often been confused when they meet Orthodox believers. At first they assume they are like Roman Catholics - they both use religious imagery in their worship and venerate Mary after all. However, they will soon discover many more similarities - and yet there are some clear differences too. What are we to make of Orthodox believers?



### Big Picture

*Union with God in our every day, multisensory experience is very much central to Orthodox faith. The history of the Orthodox churches is very different to that of the church in the West and so there are different emphases, but many of the beliefs held by Protestants can also be affirmed by Orthodox.*



### Key Truths

#### History

- Many of the differences between Orthodox believers and Protestants can be attributed to their disparate histories. The Protestant church emerged from the Roman Catholic church following the Reformation which sought to answer (among other things) the question of the authority of the church and Scripture, and how Christians are saved - whether by faith in Jesus alone, or by being united to the church expressed in faith and works.
- The Orthodox and Catholic churches split from one another almost 500 years earlier and lived under very different historical circumstances. For much of its history, Orthodoxy survived under the oppression of Islamic, and then Communist, rule.



## Key Truths (cont)

- As a result, many of the questions that Western churches have addressed in their history do not feature in Orthodox theology. Roughly speaking, the first millennium of the church was dominated by questions of the nature of God as Trinity, the nature of Christ, and the role of the Holy Spirit.
- Towards the end of that first millennium the Orthodox church had largely come under Islamic rule and so had little time for the questions that arose from the Enlightenment. Theological reflection remained in the monasteries focusing upon pious living, rather than in the universities that developed in the West, where a more scholastic approach developed.

### *Trinity*

- Therefore, Trinitarian theology is a key feature in Orthodox life and theology - and it is not the dry, scholastic exercise of Seminary professors. The Trinity permeates Orthodox liturgy and prayers - it is a truth integrated into everyday life.
- The Trinitarian theology of Orthodoxy tends to begin with the three persons who are the one God, whereas in the West we tend to focus upon the one God who is three. As a result, Protestants tend to speak of God in the singular - almost in abstract from Father, Son, Spirit. Whereas Orthodox can speak of the three persons who reveal (partially) the eternal essence of God who is ultimately beyond our understanding.

### *How do we know God?*

- Similarly, the idea of how do we know what we know was a particular concern of the Enlightenment, and so the Orthodox church has never had to concern itself with how it is that we know God.
- And so, how is it that we can know God who is eternal and beyond our understanding transcends language, imagination, symbols? We are limited and finite and so are always approaching truth - but can never arrive, the best we can hope for is a mystical vision or impression of God. By contrast, in Protestant churches the focus is on the God who has spoken in his Son. God reveals himself in his Word by his Spirit. If it is God who reveals himself in this way, we have assurance that we see him truly as we hear his word. As a result the word of God preached is a central feature of Protestant Christian worship.



## Key Truths (cont)

### *Scripture and Church Tradition*

- Scripture is key to Orthodox worship - Orthodox liturgy is awash with the Bible. Orthodox believers read the Bible with the traditions of the church fathers and saints in mind. We would be foolish and arrogant to think that we read the Bible without any church traditions in our ears. Indeed, ignoring church tradition is what produces cults. We should always listen to our brothers and sisters in Christ as we engage with the Bible - lest we be wise in our own eyes.

### *Issues of the Reformation*

- Finally, the major issues that the reformation sought to address were not a focus of the history of the Orthodox church.

#### *Authority of the Church vs Scripture*

- In terms of the authority of the church vs the authority of Scripture, the Orthodox church also rejects the claims of the Catholic church to be another source of authority. When it comes to the question of how are we saved, the Orthodox church emphasises a different problem, and a different solution focusing on union with God.

#### *Salvation*

- Orthodox churches, being under Islamic rule, never suffered the excesses the Roman church went through prior to the Reformation, neither did they go through the Enlightenment, and so the concept of dealing with our individual guilt is not a focus of Orthodox theology (though it is there, as evident in the Jesus Prayer - "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.")
- Instead the main concern is that we humans are in the image of God, but in the fall we make choices by our own free will that lead to us falling short of the likeness of God. Union with God is the goal of Orthodox belief. Sin is not our inherited bias towards disobeying God, but rather the result of our free will being deceived by the evil one and choosing evil.
- Union with God is made possible when God the Son took on flesh and took our humanity into the divine, so healing us and enabling us to become like God as we work in concert with the Holy Spirit. We enter union with God, through Christ's body - the church, and are also made one with all the saints in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- The cross of Christ and his resurrection reveal the victory over death and the powers and principalities opposed to God.



## Key Truths (cont)

### *Issues of Difference*

#### *Holy Communion*

- Orthodox believers see communion that does not see that the bread and the wine become Jesus' body and blood is communion done in an unworthy manner.

#### *Idols, Icons, Saints and Mary*

- Orthodox believers criticise Catholic worship as idolatrous, which can be confusing for Protestants because icons and images are a large part of their worship. Orthodox believers would point out that they are not worshipping the images - but use them to venerate dead saints - and particularly Mary who holds a particularly special role in their faith. Images of Christ are not worshipped, but aid in worship - and if you reject icons of Jesus as idolatrous, it denies in effect that God the Son became a part of his creation. Protestants have been unconvinced by this fine, seemingly semantic, distinction.
- Saints and Mary, are often called upon to intercede with God on our behalf in Orthodox faith. Not because they mediate between us and God - but because the dead in Christ are with us still, can hear our prayers, and can pray on our behalf - just as we may ask other Christians from church to pray for us. Protestants again find this unconvincing and find little basis for it in the Bible.

#### *Predestination*

- Orthodox faith rejects predestination - though they mean a form of fatalism that denies any human responsibility.

### *Friends or Foe?*

- We share much common ground with Orthodox believers. Jesus is our one mediator between us and God. Jesus brings us to God and we have communion with God and one another through the Spirit of God. There are different emphases, due in large to different historical experiences, but there is much we can learn from one another.
- None of the differences between Protestants and Orthodox are fatal errors that prevent us from praying with and fellowshiping together.
- Protestants can learn much about a concept of God as Trinity that has deep impacts in our lives. Orthodox can learn from hard fought truths Protestants have discovered defining how we know the God who speaks, and how God deals with our guilt and shame in the cross.

**TL:DR**



**Explore Worldview**

Fulfill	What is their mission?	The goal of Orthodox believers is to be united with God; one with Christ's body - the church, and one with all saints in the Holy Spirit
	Who are the bad guys?	The fall of humanity has meant we all fall short of the perfection under God we should have otherwise achieved. We are sinners because we choose to sin by our own free will
	Who are the good guys?	When God the Son became man, he took our humanity into the divine and heals us, enabling us to become like God as we work in concert with the Holy Spirit. The cross and the resurrection of Jesus represents the victory over death and the defeat of the powers opposing God
	Why attractive?	<p>You belong to a church that traces itself back all the way to the apostles, with an ancient form of worship that speaks afresh today. Theology is not dry, but is brought to life through the prayers and worship of church.</p> <p>Worship is intrinsic to every aspect of life, and encompasses the visual with iconography, and the sacraments are a realisation of the here and now kingdom of God.</p> <p>Having endured centuries of marginalisation and persecution, Orthodoxy has no qualms about unashamedly declaring what it believes without fear of offending anyone.</p>
Challenge	What's missing?	The Orthodox understanding of the nature of sin lacks explanatory power for the human experience of being slaves to sin. The Protestant questions of how do we know God, and how can a guilty sinner approach a holy God are important and there is a lack of focus upon them in Orthodoxy.
	What's clashing?	The Orthodox beliefs on communion, predestination, God's unknowable nature, veneration of saints, and use of icons are difficult for Protestants to understand and may be hurdles to full fellowship. However, none of these differences are fatal errors that exclude us from praying with and fellowshiping with Orthodox believers, rather there is much to be learned if we can work together for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus.
Fulfill	How is Jesus the answer?	We share much common ground with Orthodox believers. Jesus is the answer; he is the one mediator between God and us. Jesus brings us to God, and we have communion with God, and one another through the Spirit of God. There are different emphases due to different historical experiences, but we can learn much from each other.

## **A Quick Note**

It is worth noting that there are two main branches calling themselves Orthodox - Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox. The former are Russian, Greek, Ukrainian; the latter are Coptic, Etheopian, Syriac. The two split following the Council of Chalcedon in 451 over whether Christ is fully God and fully man in two natures (Eastern Orthodox), or one nature (Oriental Orthodox).

## **Application**

Hopefully, this study has introduced the somewhat foreign, yet vaguely familiar world of Orthodoxy. Often, when we meet a new believer we can be on the look out for whether they are in complete agreement with us - are they one of us?

But this can put a premature and unnecessary barrier up between someone who may well be a brother. Meeting an Orthodox believer can be an opportunity to discover a strong ally in a hostile environment.

Where can you find those points of commonality?

Where are the areas that you could learn from one another?

## **Prayer**

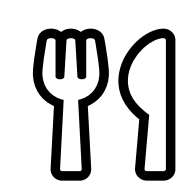
Pray for a deeper understanding of Eastern Orthodoxy so we can go deeper with our Orthodox friends and colleagues.

## **Remember**

**COFFEE**



**DINNER**



**GOSPEL**



## **Further Reading**

*Through Western Eyes: Eastern Orthodoxy: A Reformed Perspective*



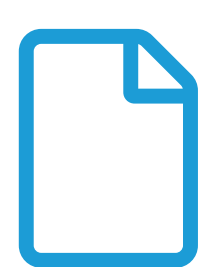
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## WORLDVIEWS: CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

### Lesson 3: 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.

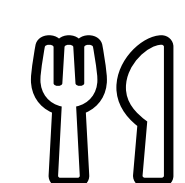
Pray for an opportunity to read through a Gospel with a Jehovah's Witness friend.

**Remember**

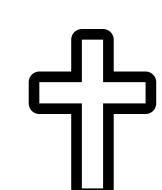
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**DINNER**



**GOSPEL**

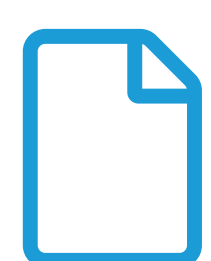


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## WORLDVIEWS: CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

### Lesson 4: 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)**

<b>Challenge</b>	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.
<b>Fulfill</b>	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?

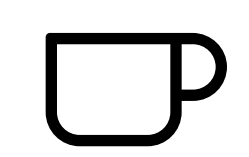
 **Prayer**

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

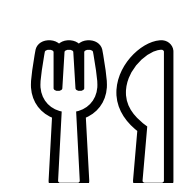
Pray for an opportunity to read through a Gospel with an LDS friend.

**Remember**

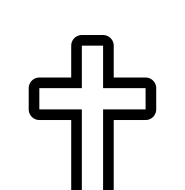
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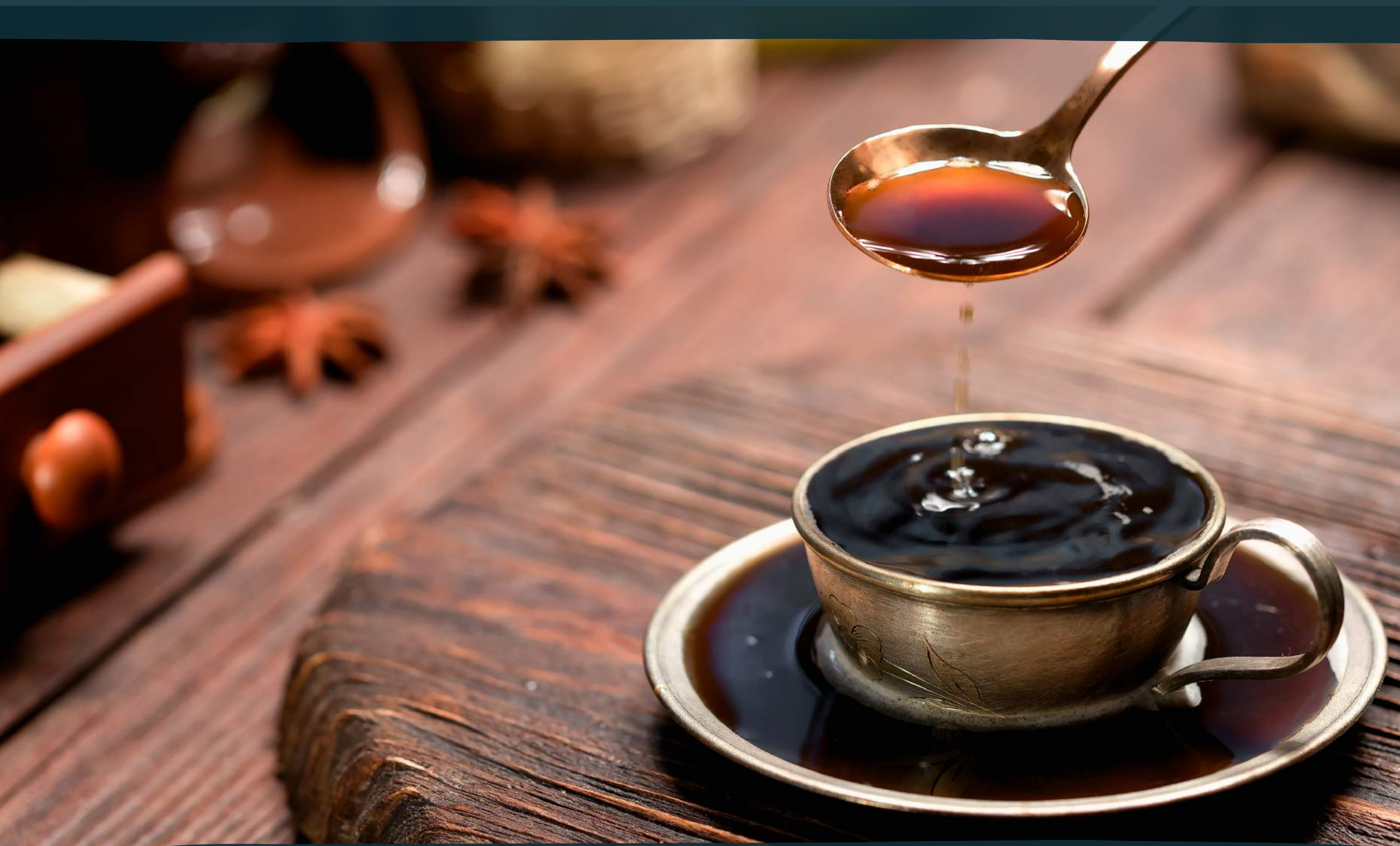


**DINNER**



**GOSPEL**





# A GENEROUS MEASURE

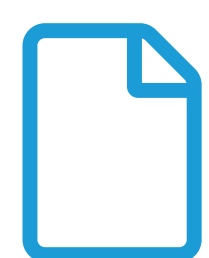


EVANGELISTIC  
**PRAYER**  
TEAMS



# A GENEROUS MEASURE

## Course Overview



### Course Summary

This study examines how generosity is our response to our generous God.

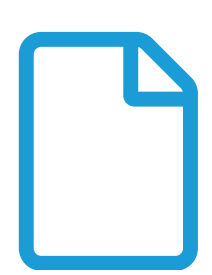
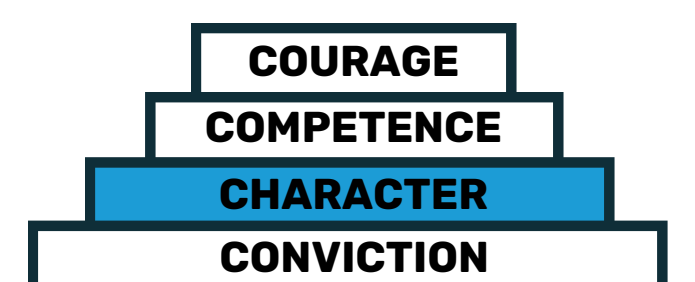


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## A GENEROUS MEASURE



### Introduction

When it comes time to give to someone in need or to a cause you believe in, how do you feel?

Are you full of joy? Do you feel the pain of the loss of your money?



### Big Picture

*God's people give generously to the work of God in the world*



### Bible Passage

*Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the Lord Almighty.*

*"But you ask, 'How are we to return?'*

*<sup>8</sup> "Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me.*

*"But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?'*

*"In tithes and offerings. <sup>9</sup> You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. <sup>10</sup> Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. <sup>11</sup> I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe," says the Lord Almighty. <sup>12</sup> "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the Lord Almighty.*

**Malachi 3:7-12**



## Key Truths

1. God's promises in his law are for his people to live his way that it may go well for them in the land. The flipside was that God would curse his people and exile them if they disobeyed.
2. God's people have now returned from that exile, but they haven't returned to him spiritually – evidenced by not bringing in the full tithe to the temple.
3. God yearns to bless his people once again in the land, but their hearts are hard to his generosity.
4. The tithe was a law God had given Israel to bring a tenth of their harvest to the temple as a mark of their thankfulness for God's generosity and provision. But also it was for the Levites to live off, so they could serve the temple rather than grow their own food.
5. Israel dragged their feet to obey him, not trusting him enough to give generously. They did not yet have the law written on their hearts. (Jeremiah 31:33)
6. This side of the death and resurrection of Jesus, we have experienced ultimate generosity from God in the gift of his Son. So a tenth is no longer our law, rather giving generously is now our measure. (Romans 12:8)

*Thoughts? Questions?*



## Application

Our calling is to give generously. We are the ones who have been given much, and so should give generously.

What principles guide you giving generously?

## **The Levite Perspective**

The Levites devoted themselves to the service of God and his people. They relied on the generosity of God through his people for their livelihood. City Bible Forum and other mission organisations likewise rely on the generosity of God through his people.

Have you considered partnering with City Bible Forum through regular financial support?  
If you are a supporter, have you reviewed your giving recently?

To become a supporter or to change your giving, go to [citybibleforum.org/support](https://citybibleforum.org/support)

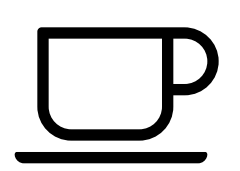


### **Prayer**

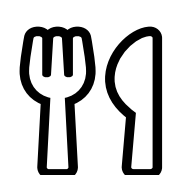
Praise God for his generosity to us in giving Jesus for us.  
Pray for a generous heart and a cheerful attitude towards giving for God's work.  
Pray for City Bible Forum's finances.

### **Remember**

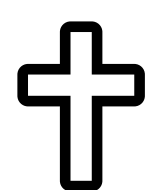
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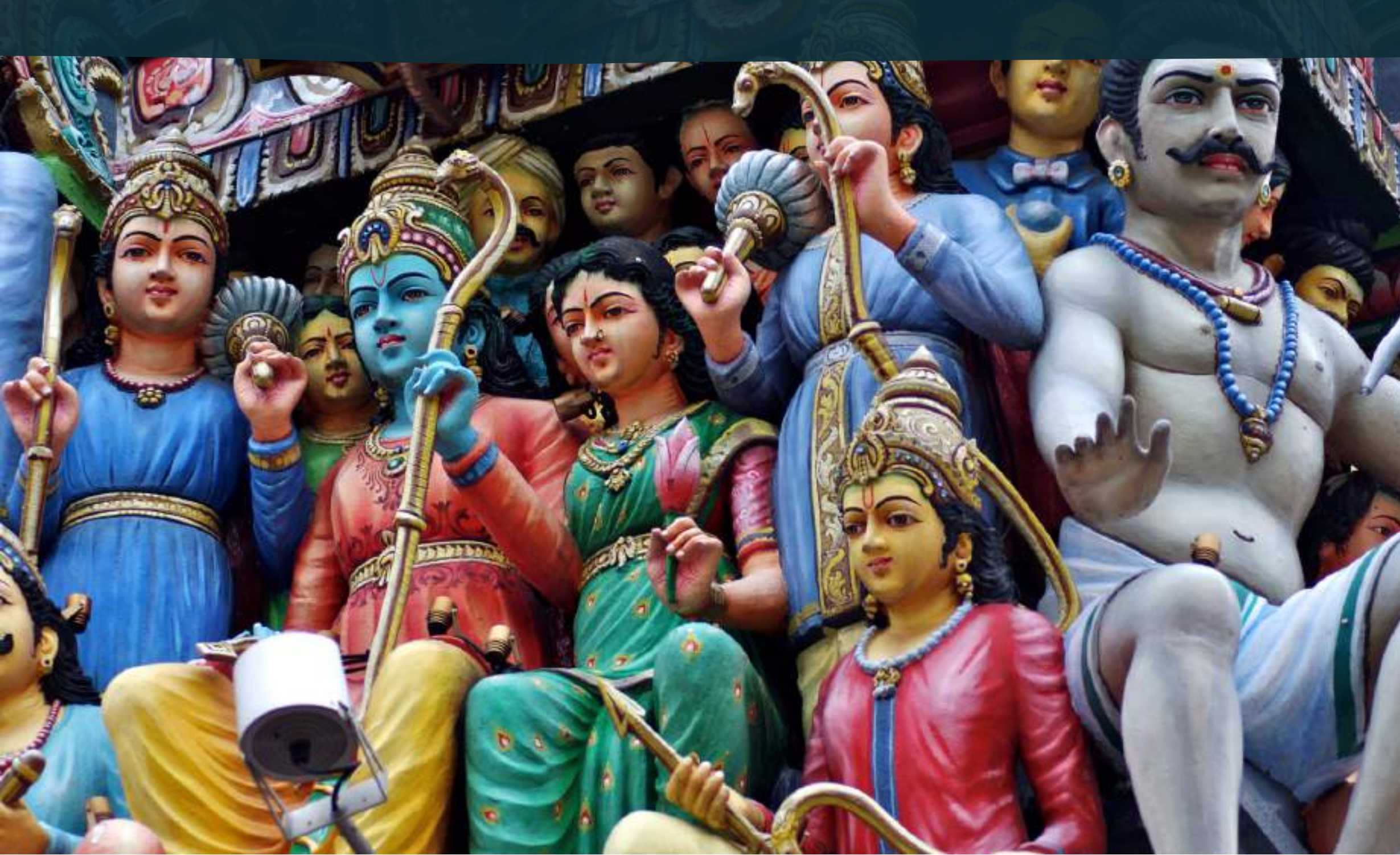


**DINNER**



**GOSPEL**





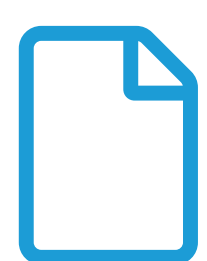
# WORLDVIEWS: WORLD RELIGIONS



EVANGELISTIC  
**PRAYER**  
TEAMS



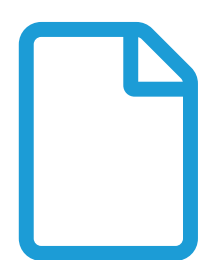
# WORLDVIEWS: WORLD RELIGIONS Course Overview



## 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. They are longer than a normal EPT study. You may choose to only do a couple of these studies, you may decide to do them over a number of weeks - feel free to do them all. However, remember the purpose is to understand their worldviews in order to ask good questions - not to start arguments!



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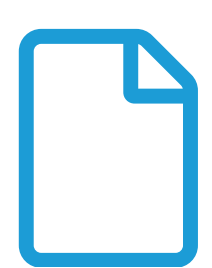
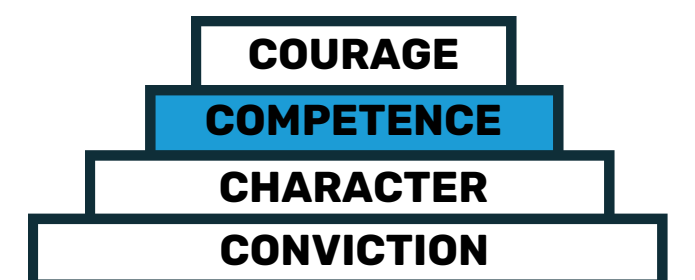
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# WORLDVIEWS: WORLD RELIGIONS

## 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?



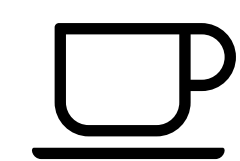
## Prayer

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

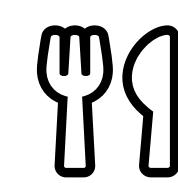
Pray for an opportunity to share Jesus with a Hindu friend or colleague.

## Remember

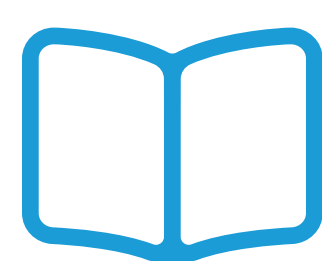
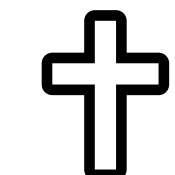
**COFFEE**



**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)



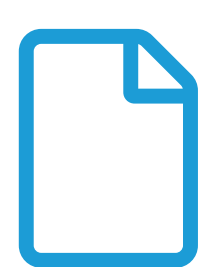
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# WORLDVIEWS: WORLD RELIGIONS

## 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 fo an opportunity to share Jesus with a Buddhist friend or colleague.

 **Further Reading**

*A Spectators Guide to World Religions* by John Dickson

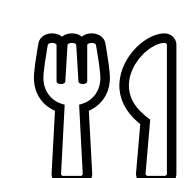
Buddha Dharma Education Association website - buddhanet.net

**Remember**

**COFFEE**



**DINNER**



**GOSPEL**

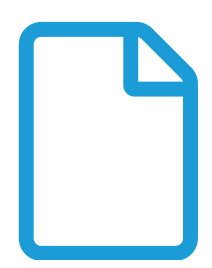
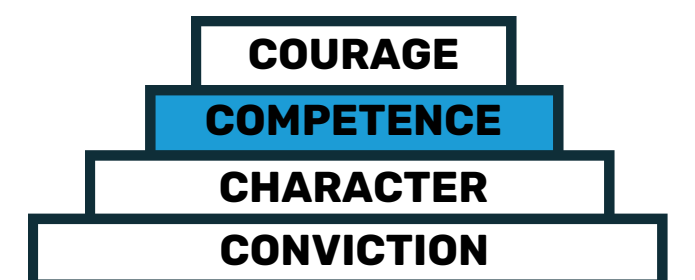


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## WORLDVIEWS: WORLD RELIGIONS

### 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?



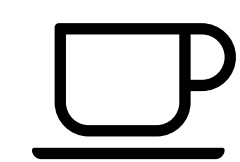
## Prayer

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

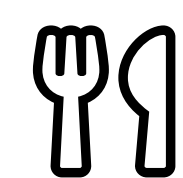
Pray for an opportunity to share Jesus with a Sikh friend or colleague.

## Remember

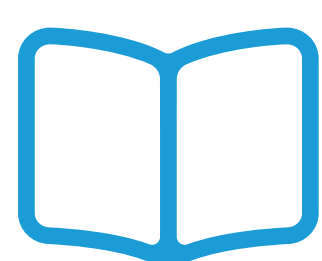
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## Further Reading

*Sikhs.org* website



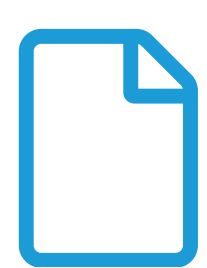
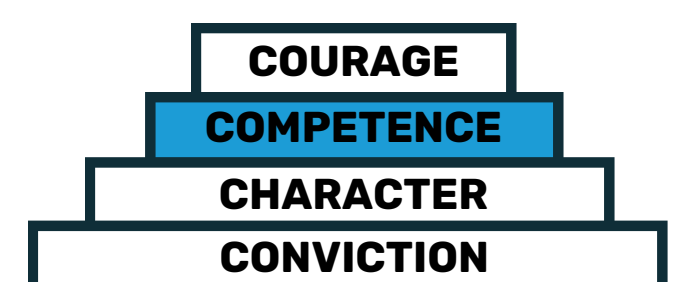
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## WORLDVIEWS: WORLD RELIGIONS **Lesson 4: Islam**



### **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?



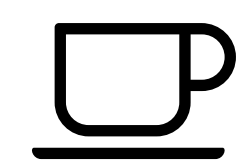
## Prayer

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

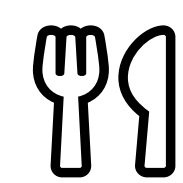
Pray for an opportunity to share Jesus with a Muslim friend or colleague.

## Remember

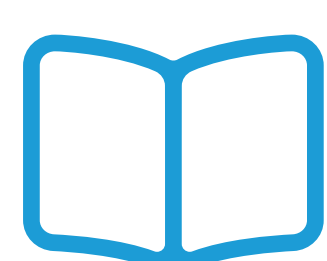
**COFFEE**



**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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# REFLECTION



EVANGELISTIC  
**PRAYER**  
TEAMS



## REFLECTION

It's time to reflect over everything God has been doing this year.

Think back over the year - look over your prayer notes and messages.  
What has God done in our lives together this year?

### **Reflect & Share**

How have you seen God answering your prayers?

With whom have you seen significant progress in relationship?

### **Brutally Honest Time**

Where do you want to be in your sharing of Jesus with friends and colleagues?

Are you on your way or no way near?

If you're not where you would like to be:

What would you be prepared to do to get to where you would like to be next year?

### **Prayer**

Thank God for answered prayer.

Thank God for his presence at work.

Thank God for how he has worked in your team this year.

Pray for your colleagues that even now God would reveal himself to them.

### **Celebrate**

If you haven't already done so, why not have a meal together to celebrate your year together?

