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a resource in:
Sunday School

World Religions Lessons



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World Religion

Lesson 1: One Path or Many Paths to Life?

Recommended Age/Class: 12-16 years old

Objectives:

- There is one true path to restored relationship with God through Jesus Christ.
- Satan has deceived many into believing there are many paths that lead to God.
- Distinguishing between true and false paths to God.

Opening Activity:

- How many answers are there to the equation $5x=10$?
- How many wrong answers are there to the same equations?

Lesson Content:

- Two supernatural powers exist. God, who is the all-powerful righteous creator and Satan, who is a powerful created being full of wickedness. God and Satan are not equal in power, strength or authority. God is supreme over all things including Satan.
- Every person as they walk through life has an awareness either conscious or unconscious that “something is wrong.” We look around and see pain, suffering, fear, and try to explain why these things are present in our world and what the solution is for these challenges. The following eight lessons are designed to consider the ways different religions answer some of life’s most important questions such as:
 - 1) The origin of life.
 - 2) The meaning of life.
 - 3) What is right and wrong?
 - 4) What happens after death?
- God and Satan both desire the heart of man. God’s message is straightforward while Satan’s message is meant to distract us from truth. Satan gives the human heart lots of options and presents himself as the great liberator. He says “do good, follow your heart and you will enter heaven” whereas God says “follow me and I will give you rest”.

Scripture:

Matthew 7:13-20 “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. 15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”

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Discussion Questions:

1. What do people tend to pursue in life?
2. There are two ways identified in verses 13 and 14. What do these verses tell us is different about the two paths?
3. What do the paths in these verses represent?
4. How do false prophets use people's desires (look at answers to question 1) to deceive them into staying on the path to destruction?
5. When you travel, you will periodically come across signs telling you where you are going. Why would someone stay on a path that takes him or her in the wrong direction?
6. What are reasons someone would tell you the path they are traveling leads to eternity with God when it does not?
7. How do you identify a false prophet? Or a path that leads to destruction vs. a path that leads to life?

Call to Salvation:

The Bible is clear-there is only one way to God. Jesus very clearly tells us in *John 14:6* that He is the only way to God. *John 14:6* "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Satan attempts to play off our desires to do what we want and still enjoy eternity in heaven. Satan presents this as a possible option but we must heed the warning in *Matthew 7* that the broad way, though inviting, leads to bondage in this life and eternal destruction. If we desire life and eternity in Heaven, it only comes through a relationship with Jesus Christ. He is the narrow path. It may seem restrictive but He actually gives abundant life.

1. What are common messages from culture and "the flesh" Satan desires to promote?
2. What false paths do you think Satan would use to deceive you and others who grow up in church?
3. Where does "good fruit" and "evil fruit" come from? *Matthew 7:17-18*

Activity: Treasure Hunt

Your goal is to find the treasure in less than 10 minutes using no more than 15 questions. Once you think you know the location of the treasure, you can check the location. If you are correct, you can have the treasure. If you are incorrect, you can use the remaining time and question to continue looking. You can also only check three locations during the course of the activity. [See Teacher Guide for instructions]

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Lesson 2: The Good News

Recommended Age/Class: 12-16 years old

Objectives:

Five central realities of The Gospel:

1. Man is dead in sin.
2. Christ as the Rescuer.
3. Salvation through faith in Christ.
4. Faith producing fruit.
5. Eternity with the Lord.

Opening Activity:

- Material: rock, living bug, plant, dead bug
- How do you distinguish between what is dead and what is a live?

Lesson Content:

- The Bible teaches that humans are inherently evil because of “the fall” in *Genesis 3*. Adam and Eve’s sin in the Garden of Eden has affected all generations since. Each of us have inherited a spiritually dead and desperately wicked heart. The evil we see around us originates from within us. This is not to diminish Satan’s evil influence on the world or individuals. He has played a role in the evil within us from the time he deceived both Adam and Eve. (*Genesis 3:1-8*) The reality of the human heart paints a hopeless picture. Man’s problem is our broken relationship with God because of our sin. We enter the world wicked and needing rescued from our wickedness.
- In the midst of this bleak picture, God provides a way to be in right relationship with Him through His son, Jesus Christ. A soul must recognize their brokenness, repent and turn to Christ. Through faith in Jesus Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, the unconverted heart is brought to life. The Believer, one who has faith in Christ’s work, is given Jesus Christ’s righteousness and through His righteousness is reconciled to God. (*Philippians 3:9*) This reconciliation leads to living a sanctified life where we live more and more inline with Christ and His teachings. (*Romans 8:29 and 2 Corinthians 3:18*)
- The converted person grows in their love for and desire to honor God. Though converted, they continue to battle the flesh and will not obtain perfection in this life. Yet they strive to follow God’s instruction for life. This means they seek to be ruled by God’s law even where it is contrary to their own desires. As they walk with the Lord, their desires will come more and more in line with God’s desires.
- Due to Christ bringing life to the believer’s heart, they are to live as one in God’s Kingdom wherever they go through seeking their life as a reflection of Christ. The Gospel Message:
 1. Man is dead in sin and without hope.
 2. Christ lived a sinless life and gave us the perfect example of how to live. He brought God’s Kingdom to us so we can share it with others. He paid the debt of sin for those who believe in Him and rescued us from Satan’s grasp.
 3. Man is brought to life through faith in Jesus Christ’s work on the cross. (Justification)
 4. The “saved” live a life more and more devoted to God. (Sanctification)
 5. Eternity in Heaven awaits the “saved”.

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Scripture:

Ephesians 2:1-9 “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”

Discussion Questions:

1. How does *Ephesians 2:1-3* describe the unconverted person?
2. What do you notice in your daily life that shows the reality of man’s problem? (sin, tragedy, etc.)
3. What must happen for a soul to shift from death to life? (*Ephesians 2:4-9*)
4. What is God’s solution to man’s problem?
5. Describe what keeps man from seeking this solution.
6. How would you summarize what these verses say about right and wrong?
7. What is the significance of salvation coming through faith and not works?
8. What does this (answer to question 7) tell us about the Bible’s teaching on where life originates?
9. What do verses 6 and 7 tell us about life in Christ?

Call to Salvation:

Christianity believes that sin separates man from God and this separation can only be removed through placing one’s faith in Jesus Christ. Christianity teaches that life’s ultimate purpose is to acknowledge our brokenness, turn to Christ for healing, and to live in communion with Him. (*Philippians 3:7-14*)

Jesus has paid the penalty for sin through living a perfect life and yet dying on a cruel cross.

- Why was Jesus’ sacrifice necessary?
- The Greek word translated to Gospel means “the good news” - why is the Gospel good news?

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Christian Worldview:

1. Origin of Life: Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Ghost as Creator of all things. (*Genesis 1:1*)
2. Purpose of Life: Glorify or bring Honor to God through yielding to Him and living according to His will. (*Isaiah 43:6,7, Ecclesiastes 12:13*)
3. Right from Wrong: Right and wrong are outlined and defined by God through the teachings of the Bible. (*Psalms 119:105*)
4. After Death: After death, there are two eternal destinations. Heaven awaits those who have been redeemed through faith in Jesus Christ and Hell awaits those who never turned to Christ. (*John 3:14-21*)

Activity:

Death to Life

World Religion

Lesson 3: Is there Truth? - New Age Spirituality

Recommended Age/Class: 12-16 years old

Objectives:

- New Age spirituality worldview - What do they believe?
- The appeal of this belief system.
- Dangers of this belief system.
- Where this worldview collides with Christianity.

Opening Activity:

- Material: Connect Four Game (*If you do not have a Connect Four Game you could do something on the white board such as Hang Man.*)
- Ask for two volunteers to play the game. After they are finished, ask for two other students to play and ignore all the rules.
 - Do rules constrict or provide freedom?

Lesson Content:

- The New Age Spirituality belief system is difficult to define, as there are many different labels and nuances of beliefs. New Age Spirituality is not necessarily an organized religion. Someone holding to this view would likely be open to the existence of spiritual forces, yet they would deny anything as having absolute authority.
- A common belief is there is no “absolute truth”. No “absolute truth” means there is nothing that is true for all people at all times; instead, truth is what each individual deems as true. This leads to teaching tolerance and allowing each person to live, as they desire without pushing specific beliefs or views on someone else. Rather than focusing on what someone believes, they would focus on how someone is to live. One’s life goal would be to love others and find their true self. Finding your true self leads to living consistent with their desires and not be ruled by society or what others might desire for them.
- On the surface, this worldview can seem right and good. At times, it will even present itself as a form of Christianity. Some who ascribe to this view can appreciate the Bible’s moral teachings on loving and serving others. However, they would not believe in the Bible as the inspired word of God. Nor would they agree with all of the teachings of the Bible but would pick and choose what teachings they like and discard teachings they do not like.
- It is difficult to define what someone from this worldview believes because everyone’s belief would be somewhat different. Some believe in a God, where others do not. Some would value parts of the Bible, where others would not. This worldview says the most important thing is to be true to one’s self and show kindness to others.

New Age Worldview:

1. Origin of Life: They are not sure and would say there are a lot of opinions so don’t worry about it.
2. Purpose of Life: Love other people and live in harmony.
 - a. Find your true desires and live them out.
3. Right from Wrong: Everyone is entitled to his or her own opinion about right and wrong as long as it does not interfere with someone else.
4. Life after death: Beliefs vary, but in general, most believe that all end up in a pleasant eternal home.

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Scripture:

Matt 22:37-40 “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Discussion Questions:

1. What might someone who agrees with the “New Age Spirituality” worldview agree with from *Matthew 22:37-40*?
2. In what ways does the New Age Spirituality sound similar to Christianity?
3. In what ways does this viewpoint sound appealing?
4. Would you see any dangers in this worldview?
5. Could someone follow this type of belief system and believe they are a Christian? How so?
6. What might someone who agrees with the “New Age Spirituality” worldview disagree with or have a different interpretation of from *Matthew 22:37-40*?

If time allows: read *Matthew 7* and circle what someone from a New Age Spirituality worldview would support. Then underline other parts of *Matthew 7* someone from the New Age Spirituality perspective would likely disregard.

- What do you notice from this exercise?

Call to Salvation:

One of the fundamental teachings of Christianity is due to Adam and Eve’s sin in *Genesis 3*, humans are inherently evil and need to be rescued from Satan and themselves. This core teaching in Christianity is in direct opposition to the New Age Spirituality worldview.

- Christianity Teaches: You are in need of being reconciled to God through placing your faith in Jesus Christ. Through faith in Christ we are reconciled to God (*Romans 3:23-28*) and then through God working in us we are to love and serve others. (*Ephesians 2:1-13*) Read the verses in *Matthew 22:37-40* and have students focus on the order: first love God and then love others.
- New Age Spirituality Teaches: First, you are a good person and then second, go love other people. New Age Spirituality removes the need for God or salvation and just tells the person to love others. Those who follow this worldview appear to be very nice, kind and loving people. They may do many nice things but they do not know or follow the one true God, which means they are still dead in their sin even though they do nice things.

Activity:

No Rules

- Have you ridden in a car recently? Why do so many people use vehicles as a way of transportation?

World Religion

Lesson 4 - One God, No Jesus (Islam and Judaism)

Recommended Age/Class: 12-16 years old

Objectives:

- Islam, Judaism, and Christianity all believe there is one true God. However, these religions are vastly different from one another and each of these three religions worship a different God.
- Basic understanding of Islam and Judaism.
- Where these worldviews collide with Christianity.

Opening Activity:

The purpose of this activity is to help students understand the special qualities of God that exist because of the relationships that exist in the Trinity (between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit). To illustrate that God's qualities do not require mankind and that He is sufficient in and of Himself, a role play will be used to consider the quality that "God speaks."

- Ask for 1 volunteer to come forward.
- Explain to the class they should imagine this person is the only person in the world. No one else exists.
- Ask for the volunteer to say something. Ask the class to consider what purpose this speaking serves if no one was there to hear or respond to it.
- Now ask for 2 volunteers to come forward.
- Explain to the class they should imagine these are the only two people in the world. No one else exists.
- Ask the two volunteers to speak back and forth to each other. Ask the class to consider how speech has purpose when there is another person to hear and respond to it.

Conclude by making the connection that because of the Trinity (3 in 1) we have a God that has all of His wonderful relational qualities without mankind to be the beneficiary. For example, when God says He is Love, this was true long before humans were created. God is complete in Himself.

Lesson Content:

Islam:

Islam is a monotheistic (belief in one true God) religion. While Islam and Christianity have very different beliefs, they have similar accounts of creation.

Muslims believe Allah:

- Is a merciful God who created the universe and everything in it.
- Forgave Adam and Eve for their transgressions in the Garden of Eden and there were no lasting impacts of their sin. They do not believe they became spiritually dead nor that this deadness was transferred to future generations. As a result, there is no concept of original sin in Islam.

Muslims believe Man:

- Is morally neutral at birth and can choose either to do good or evil.
- If someone chooses to do more good than evil, they will go to heaven. If they do more evil than good, they will go to hell.

So while Christians and Muslims have similar creation accounts, they have very different beliefs about Man, God and salvation.

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	Christians Believe	Muslims Believe
Man's Position Before God	Man is born spiritually dead and needs to be brought to spiritual life.	Man is born spiritually neutral and can choose to do good apart from God's intervention.
God's Posture Toward Man	God desires an intimate relationship with man.	God is distant and unknowable for man.
Salvation	Through faith in Jesus Christ's work on the cross.	Through doing more good works than bad works. (Being good enough.)
God	Belief in one God who is distinct in three persons (Trinity): The Father, Son and Holy Ghost	God is one in essence and person.
Scripture	Holy Bible	Quran
Jesus	He is God. The Messiah who took on flesh and overcame sin and death.	A prophet.

- Muhammad is the central human figure of Islam. Muslims consider him The Prophet who exposed the truth about who God is and how to be His follower. At the age of 40, Muhammad (610AD) was praying and meditating in a cave when he received his first revelation. Muslims believe Muhammad continued to receive revelation about Allah and how to follow him over the course of Muhammad's life from Gabriel. Muhammad would memorize these revelations and then recite them to his followers. These revelations were compiled and today make up the Quran. The Quran contains Islam's teachings and beliefs. Much like the Holy Bible is to the Christian, the Quran is to the Muslim.

Islam Worldview:

1. Origin of Life: Allah is the only god and he is creator of all things.
2. Purpose of Life: Submit to Allah.
3. Right from Wrong: Outlined and defined by God through the teachings of the Quran.
4. After Death: There are two eternal destinations. Heaven awaits those who have done enough good and Hell awaits those who have been bad.

Judaism:

Judaism is a monotheistic (belief in one true God) religion.

- Their Bible called the Hebrew Bible or the Tanakh is very similar to the Old Testament portion of the Christian Bible. They also have what is call The Talmud: this is a Jewish rabbi's interpretation of how to live out the teachings from the Old Testament. For example, *Exodus 20:8* says "Remember the Sabbath Day". The Talmud would give Jewish Rabbi's interpretation of what this looks like to live out. The Talmud gives different Rabbi's views on topics without coming to a consensus on how to live out a teaching from the Hebrew Bible.
- Jews are waiting for the Messiah and do not believe Jesus was the promised Messiah. Jews believe the Messiah will be a political leader who will come with strong military power. Jews do not see Jesus as anyone important.
- Judaism is not as focused as other religions on trying to convert others to their view. Jews hold themselves to high standards regarding following the laws of the Torah - first five books of the Bible. Yet they believe all God requires of Gentiles is they follow the seven laws of Noah:

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1. No Murder
2. No Sexual Immorality
3. No Idolatry
4. No eating animals from torn limbs
5. No cursing God
6. No theft
7. Setting up a system of law

Judaism Worldview:

1. Origin of Life: God as Creator of all things.
2. Purpose of Life: Obey God's law.
3. Right from Wrong: are outlined and defined by God through the teachings of Torah - first five books of the Christian Bible.
4. After Death: Jews are uncertain of what happens after death. Most would encourage living by the law and letting the afterlife take care of itself.

Scripture:

John 14:6-14 "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."

Discussion Questions:

1. How would you respond to someone who says Christianity, Islam, and Judaism are the same?
2. Circle Jesus' claims about himself in *John 14:6-14*. How would these claims collide with the beliefs of Islam and Judaism?
3. According to *John 14:6-14* how would you describe the relationship between Jesus and The Father?
4. If you were talking with someone of the Islam or Judaism faith would you focus on helping him or her live a Godly life or knowing Jesus? Why?
5. As we interact with individuals of differing beliefs, we often find out they live honorably. How would you help someone understand their need for a Savior when they may not realize they need a Savior?

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Call to Salvation:

In Islam, there is no need for salvation. They believe you get what you deserve based on how you live. In Judaism, salvation is needed but is coming from a future messiah. They would primarily see salvation occurring through following the law and trusting in the future messiah. Christianity differs from both Islam and Judaism in believing salvation is needed and is found through trusting in Jesus Christ as Lord. Faith is central in all three of these religions but where each places their faith is vastly different. In Islam, faith is placed in an individual's actions. In Judaism, faith is placed in a future Messiah. In Christianity, faith is placed in the completed work of Jesus Christ.

Activity:

Which Goes Where?

World Religion

Lesson 5: Are they Christian? (Mormonism and Jehovah Witness)

Recommended Age/Class: 12-16 years old

Objectives:

- Mormonism and Jehovah Witness worldview (What do they believe?)
- The appeal of this belief system.
- Dangers of this belief system.
- Where this worldview collides with Christianity.

Opening Activity:

- Material: A real \$20 and a fake \$20.
 - Which of these existed first?

Lesson Content:

Mormonism: (Church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saints)

History: Joseph Smith founded the Mormon Church in 1830 in Palmyra, New York. Joseph Smith claimed he received direct revelation from Jesus Christ who told him all churches were deceived and then shared the “true gospel” with him. In 1830, Smith’s beliefs were published in “The Book of Mormon”. Smith claimed to continue receiving revelation and compiled later revelations into another holy book for Mormons called “Doctrines and Covenants”. While many Mormons claim they are Christians, Joseph Smith claimed what he was told by God and Jesus that all Christian churches were wrong, their creeds were an abomination and their beliefs corrupt. Joseph Smith does not sound like he saw himself or what he believed as being in-line with other Christian denominations. He saw his beliefs and teachings as distinct from the Christian religion.

	Christians Believe	Mormons Believe
Man’s Position Before God	Man is born spiritually dead and needs to be brought to spiritual life.	Man is inherently good and living correctly can lead to man becoming a god in the afterlife.
Salvation	Through faith in Jesus Christ.	Through combination of faith, good works, Mormon baptism and laying on of hands.
God	Belief in one God who is distinct in three persons (Trinity): The Father, Son and Holy Ghost	Belief in multiple gods but one ultimate God “Heavenly Father”, who was a man but became God through obedience. (They deny the doctrine of The Trinity)
Scripture	Holy Bible	Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price, King James Bible: as far as it was correctly translated
Jesus	He is God. The Messiah who took on flesh and overcame sin and death.	A spirit baby of “Heavenly Father” and Mary. A God but a lesser God than “Heavenly Father” .

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Mormon Worldview:

1. Origin of Life: Matter has always existed. Every person was once a “spirit baby” who became human.
2. Purpose of Life: Follow the Mormon teachings so you can become a God.
3. Right from Wrong: These are outlined and defined by God through the 4 sacred writings.
4. After Death: There are four eternal destinations. Celestial is the highest level of heaven where God and faithful Mormon members dwell. Terrestrial is the next highest level of heaven for those who do not accept the teachings of the Mormon Church but otherwise live honorable lives. Telestial is the lowest level of heaven for those who did not live good lives. The other eternal destination is called “outer darkness” which is where those who were once members of the Mormon church and walked away from it go.

Jehovah Witness: (Watchtower Bible and Tract Society)

History: Charles Taze Russell was founder and first president of the Jehovah’s Witness church. This church was originally called “Watchtower Bible and Tract Society”. He created his own magazine in 1879 called “Zion’s Watch Tower and Herald of Christ’s Presence” now called “The Watchtower”. Joseph F. Rutherford was the second president and adopted the name “Jehovah’s Witnesses” which is how they now identify themselves. While they identify themselves as a Christian church, they deny several core Christian doctrines and affirm several doctrines, which are outside of orthodox Christianity. For these reasons, they are distinct from the Christian worldview.

	Christians Believe	Jehovah Witnesses Believe
God	Belief in one God who is distinct in three persons (Trinity): The Father, Son and Holy Ghost	Belief in multiple gods but one ultimate God “Jehovah”. (Deny the doctrine of The Trinity)
Scripture	Holy Bible	New World Translation (NWT) version of the Bible. They published this in 1961. Several passages they translated differently than other Bible translations to fit their doctrine.
Jesus	He is God. The Messiah who took on flesh and overcame sin and death.	Jesus is a God but a lesser God who was created by the ultimate God. In 1954, they stopped worshipping Jesus saying it was idolatrous to do so. They see Him as the first creation of God.

- The trinity is a foundation doctrine of the Christian faith. Instead of believing in one true God, JW believe in multiple gods who have different levels of superiority. While there are many differences between Christianity and JW, the difference of how they see God and Jesus are the core differences which is of utmost importance.
- Another difference between Christianity and JW is JW believe only 144,000 people will be allowed into heaven. These are referred to as the “anointed” and the 144,000 have all been accounted for by 1935 meaning no one born after 1935 will be allowed into heaven. However, they believe other good people will live on earth in its original created state (prior to the fall in *Genesis 3*).
- JW would say salvation comes through faith in Jesus’. They would see salvation as a gift from God but also place a high emphasis on works and being in good standing with the JW church as part of salvation. Some would say JW believe salvation is earned through good works. They do not believe in hell or that eternal punishment for sin exists. Those who die in their sin will just cease to exist.

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Jehovah's Witnesses Worldview:

1. Origin of Life: God is the creator of all things.
2. Purpose of Life: Obey God.
3. Right from Wrong: Outlined and defined by God in the New World Translation of the Bible.
4. After Death: There are two options -- heaven awaits those who have been saved and those who are not saved just cease to exist.

Scripture:

Isaiah 44:6-8 "Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. 7 And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them. 8 Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any."

Discussion Questions:

1. What does *Isaiah 44:6-8* teach us about God? How are these teachings similar or different from Mormonism and Jehovah Witnesses view of God?
2. How would you respond to someone who says Christianity and Mormonism are the same?
3. How would you respond to someone who says Christianity and Jehovah Witness are the same?
4. What are the differences in how Christians, Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses view Jesus?
5. If you were talking with a Mormon or Jehovah Witness, would you focus on helping them live a Godly life or know the God of the Bible? Why?
6. Often the New Testament draws on the Old Testament to teach and bring into greater focus the truths in the Old Testament. *Hebrews 1:10* is drawing from *Psalms 102:25*. Read *Hebrews 1:6-12* and *Psalms 102:24-27*. How might these verses be used to help expound the truth about who God is to a Mormon or JW?
7. Read the chart comparing Christianity, Mormonism, and Jehovah Witnesses beliefs. What differences stand out to you?

Call to Salvation:

Among other things, Mormons and Jehovah Witness' have very different views on hell from Christianity. Mormons believe only those who have walked away from Mormon church will go to hell while Jehovah Witnesses believe there is no hell. The Bible clearly teaches there to be two eternal destinations, Heaven and Hell. Heaven is the eternal dwelling place for all who place their faith in Jesus Christ. Through faith in Jesus Christ, His righteousness is given to the believer (*Philippians 3:9, 2 Corinthians 5:21*). Faith in Jesus Christ is the only hope for heaven. (*Romans 5:1*)

Activity:

God and His creation

World Religion

Lesson 6: You Get What You Deserve: Eastern Religion (Hinduism and Buddhism)

Recommended Age/Class: 12-16 years old

Objectives:

- Hinduism and Buddhism worldviews (What do they believe?)
- The appeal of this belief system.
- Dangers of this belief system.
- Where this worldview collides with Christianity.

Opening Activity:

- What would it take for a rotten tomato to become edible?

Lesson Content:

Hinduism:

Hinduism does not have central doctrines or creeds to which its followers all agree on. For this reason, Hinduism is considered the least dogmatic of the major world religions. They believe truth is eternal and there are many ways to truth. They believe in many gods but one ultimate god called Brahman who created everything and is in everything. All gods can be worshiped and there is no right way to worship these gods. Individuals pick which god or gods they will worship and be devoted to. They then seek to become one with these gods, which they believe will make them one with Brahman, who they consider to be the ultimate god.

In Hinduism, humans are believed to be immortal and going through endless cycles of reincarnation. They believe you are reincarnated according to how you lived in your previous life. If you live well you will be reincarnated into higher class while if you live wrongly then you will be reincarnated into a lower class. The process of being reincarnated according to how you live is called Karma. The goal of life in Hinduism is to break out of the endless cycle of reincarnation. Each individual has to live their life according to their own dharma, which is the way of righteousness. Part of life is discovering this way of truth and how to live according to it.

Hinduism Worldview:

1. Origin of Life: There is no beginning but rather many beginnings.
2. Life Mission: Live according to your dharma. Dharma is each person's right religious and moral law.
3. Right and wrong are outlined and defined in sacred scriptures, which focus on living morally and religious devotion, but there is no one right way to live.
4. After death, you are reincarnated. As you live rightly, you are progressively reincarnated into higher levels of the caste system. As you progress, you will ultimately break free of the cycle of reincarnation and become one with Brahman.

World Religion

Buddhism:

Siddhartha Gautama is the founder of Buddhism. He grew up in a royal family and was sheltered from the outside world. One day he was able to leave the palace and for the first time came across the reality of suffering in the world. He was also intrigued by the happiness he saw in a poor beggar. Siddhartha Gautama was amazed that the beggar's happiness in spite of his circumstance. Through seeing life outside of the palace, he decided to leave his privileged life to seek understanding and spiritual enlightenment.

During this time of searching, he was meditating near the Ganges River where he learned what he called the "Four Noble Truths":

1. All life is suffering.
2. The cause of suffering is desire.
3. Eliminating desire is the way to eliminating suffering
4. Desire can be eliminated by following the Eightfold Path.

This understanding led to Siddhartha becoming Buddha or the "the enlightened one". Buddhism believes you must find truth within one's self. Buddhism does not focus on a god or gods; the focus is on disconnecting from desire or attachment so you can escape suffering. This in turn leads to being able to experience true happiness. A saying that captures this idea in Buddhism is "you first must lose everything to have anything". One of the central ideas in Buddhism is that how your life goes depends on you. You do not need to look to something outside of yourself for hope or strength. Rather you need to look within and take responsibility for your life.

Buddhism Worldview:

1. Origin of Life: No specific teaching on this.
2. Life Mission: Eliminate suffering, gain enlightenment & follow the Eightfold Path:
 1. Right Understanding
 2. Right Thought
 3. Right Speech
 4. Right Action
 5. Right Livelihood
 6. Right Effort
 7. Right Mindfulness (concentration)
 8. Right Meditation
3. Right and wrong: Knowledge of right and wrong come through self-awareness and self-understanding. (Generally: Avoid killing or harming living beings, Avoid Stealing, Avoid Sexual Misconduct, Avoid Lying, Avoid Alcohol and Intoxicating Drugs)
4. After death: believe in the cycle of death and rebirth. Through right living "nirvana" can eventually be reached. Most Buddhists believe that when "nirvana" is reached, the individual dies and are not reborn.

World Religion

Scripture:

Romans 3:9-18 “What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; 10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. 13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: 14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: 15 Their feet are swift to shed blood: 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways: 17 And the way of peace have they not known: 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

Discussion Questions:

1. What does *Romans 3:9-18* teach us about man? How are these teachings similar or different from Hinduism and Buddhism’s view of man?
2. How would you respond to the following objection of *Romans 3:9-18*?
 - a. “*Romans 3:9-18* seems to be saying no one does anything good. I see many non-Christians who do good things. Therefore, what *Romans 3* is teaching must be inaccurate.”
3. What changes a person according to each of the following religions? Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity?
4. If you were talking with a Hindu or Buddhist, would you focus on helping them live a Godly life or know the God of the Bible? Why?
5. Read the chart comparing Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism beliefs. What differences stand out to you? World Religions Chart: <http://www.walkthru.org/wr>

Call to Salvation:

According to the Bible, we are spiritually dead and unable to generate anything good of ourselves. We need the work of Christ on the cross to transform us, giving us a new heart and bringing spiritual life. Through faith we are rescued, transformed and to live through the empowerment of God being in us. (*Galatians 2:16-20*)

Activity:

Which leader sounds more appealing to follow?

World Religion

Lesson 7: Where They Stand: Comparing Religions

Recommended Age/Class: 12-16 years old

Objectives:

- Review key differences of world religions compared to Christianity.
- Highlight key Christian beliefs.

Opening Activity:

- How would you get to know someone you would never meet in person?

Lesson Content:

The past five weeks have been focused on giving a brief introduction to 8 major world religions. There are three main areas where other world religions disagree with Christianity. Some world religions disagree with Christianity on all three points while others disagree with Christianity on only one of the three points below.

1. There is One God
2. Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.
3. Jesus as Equal with God and Eternally Existing (not created).
 - Which religions would agree with Christianity that there is one God?
 - Which religions would agree with Christianity that there is: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit?
 - Which religions would agree with Christianity that Jesus (and the Holy Spirit) are co-equal, co-eternal with God the Father?

Scripture:

Philippians 2:5-11 "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

World Religion

Discussion Questions:

1. Who is exalted in these verses?
2. What do these verses tell the reader to do?
3. Why is it so important to understand who Jesus is?
4. What is one word or short phrase each world religion covered in these lessons might use to describe Jesus?
 - a. Islam, Judaism, New Age Spirituality, Mormonism, Jehovah Witness, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity
5. What do these verses tell us about Jesus?
6. How do these things either align or go against what other world religions believe about Jesus?

Call to Salvation:

In the Gospel according to *Matthew 16:13-15* Jesus asks His disciples two questions: “*Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*” and “*But whom say ye that I am?*” This is the central question everyone will answer. We must first answer this question for ourselves and then humbly acknowledge that if we come to faith in Jesus, our faith has come about by God revealing it to us. (*Matthew 16:17*) This should humble us and lead us to patiently point others to Jesus Christ. He is the Great I Am, God incarnate who is co-equal, co-eternal with God the Father and has purchased eternal life through His willing sacrifice.

Activity:

Which religion does this describe?

World Religion

Lesson 8: Why are there so many religions?: Living with Boldness and Humility

Recommended Age/Class: 12-16 years old

Objectives:

- Help students consider what they believe about Jesus.
- Helping students wrestle through the reality that there are many different worldviews.

Opening Activity:

- What are examples of questions where there is only correct answer and questions where there are many different possible answers?

Lesson Content:

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” Genesis 1:1 God created a perfect world and gave man the position of having dominion over the earth and the other creatures God had created. (Genesis 1:26) God gave man the privilege to rule over His created world but they had to trust Him and live under His authority. In Genesis 2:17 God tells man they are not to eat of the tree of *“the knowledge of good and evil”* this is the only restriction we see God placing on Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

At this point in the biblical account creation and life in God’s created world is perfect. Man is given the authority to rule the earth and its inhabitants. There is a perfect relationship between God and Man and there is no confusion about who is God and who is not. The world is not void of evil but its presence and impact is limited such that it is not even mentioned until chapter 3 verse 1 where this evil is called *“the serpent”*. We do not even realize the serpent is evil until we realize the serpent seems to be challenging God’s message and heart toward Eve. To this point in the story, Eve fully trusts God and is willing to live within the structure God has created.

Now, the serpent begins to challenge Eve’s assumptions about God and suggests God is holding out on her. He wants Eve to doubt God and rebel against His authority by eating of the tree of *“the knowledge of good and evil”*. In doing so evil shifts from being present with minimal effect to becoming a powerful force able to corrupt man’s heart, the created world, and man’s relationship with God. Adam and Eve’s rebellion against God changed the world and specifically change man’s relationship with God. Essentially, man decided to dissolve his relationship with God in hopes of finding a better deal.

Since then man has been on a journey for a “better deal” than what God offers. This has led to the creation of many false gods and many false religions. Man continues to rebel against God’s message. Instead, man desires to create our own path for life. This ultimately leads man away from the true path of life into creating a false path that either feels better, looks more appealing, or makes more sense to man’s corrupted mind. The message of living under the authority of the good and trustworthy God of the Bible is distorted by the continual work of “the serpent” whose work is to cast doubt constantly on the goodness of God.

World Religion

Scripture:

Genesis 11:1-9 “And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. 2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. 3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. 4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. 5 And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. 6 And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. 7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech. 8 So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. 9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.”

Discussion Questions:

1. If you look just at *Genesis 11:1-4* what is the people’s plan? Do you think the plan sounds good, bad, or neutral?
2. Reading verses 5-9 what does God think of their plan? Why does He intervene so their plan is not able to happen?
3. Identify words you would use to describe God from *Genesis 11:1-9*.
4. Identify words you would use to describe man from *Genesis 11:1-9*.
5. How would your view of God or man change if you would also consider God’s instruction to Noah two chapters earlier in *Genesis 9:1* - “And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth”?
6. How would your view of God or man change if you also consider *Genesis 6:5-8* - “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. 7 And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. 8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord”?

Call to Salvation:

Early in the Bible man rebelled against God’s authority. Evil took root in the heart of man and all of creation was corrupted as a result. The Bible is a story of God relentlessly pursuing a rebellious people. As we walk through life, it can be easy for Satan to convince us the God does not care for us or that we should be able to follow whatever path we desire. The reality is God is our creator and we need Him. He loves and cares for us far greater than we deserve and we are to live as grateful children to almighty God. We are to seek to know and follow Him even when, in our brokenness, we naturally rebel against being under His authority.

Activity:

Why is the God of the Bible ...?