

Getting Started

The more you study other religions, the more you will realize that they all teach a spiritual reality beyond common human experience. All religions attempt to connect humans with this spiritual reality and thus lead better lives. Due to this, many religions reflect the same core moral commandments such as telling the truth, not stealing, not murdering, and seeking peace.

It is common to be “spiritual but not religious” these days, and this term allows one to focus on the vague spiritual reality that underlies all religions. However, what about those who are **spiritual and religious**? Religions go way beyond this vague spiritual reality and are full of specifics, whether those are a specific god(s), specific afterlives, specific rituals, etc.

This discussion guide creates a conversation around the similarities and differences between religions and whether only one or multiple religions can be true.

For me, the different religions are beautiful flowers from the same garden, or they are branches of the same majestic tree. Therefore, they are equally true, though being received and interpreted through human instruments equally imperfect.

- Mahatma Gandhi

There is only one religion, though there are a hundred versions of it.

- George Bernard Shaw

◆ Choose one

What religions were you most exposed to while growing up?

Were you encouraged to commit to one religion, experience many, or not interact with religion?

When you look at all the religions that exist, do you see more similarities or differences?

What's one tradition, belief, or value that you really appreciate that comes from a religion other than your own?



“Besides Me, There is No God”

Some religions allow for multiple sets of beliefs, and participation in multiple religions. For example, someone who believes in and practices Shintoism may equally believe in and practice Buddhism, which is a completely acceptable practice in Japanese culture and those religions. While much of this is due to the cultural and historical context surrounding the religion, part of this belief may be due to the idea that all religions point to the same ultimate reality.

Christianity, along with several other religions such as Islam and Judaism, are grounded in the belief of religious exclusivity—the belief that only one religion is true.

In Scripture, God often referred to himself as being the only God.

6 Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.” **(Isaiah 44:6)**

10 “You are my witnesses,” declares the Lord, “and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me **(Isaiah 43:10)**.

11 I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior.” **(Isaiah 43:10-11)**

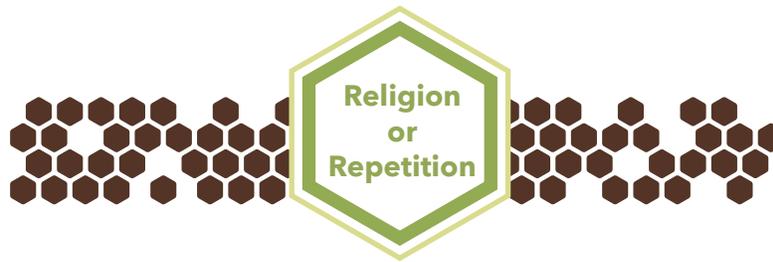
13 Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. **14** But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. **(Matthew 7:13-14)**

6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. **(John 14:6)**

Choose one

What is your narrow way, and what is your wide way? (See Matthew 7 verse above)

How do you decide what is the way the truth and the life for you? (See John 14 verse above)



Going Deeper

Compared to previous centuries when people were exposed to fewer religions, we now have so many choices! We are surrounded by opportunities to practice a number of different religions, as well as options for not engaging with religion. Our religious beliefs are yet another piece of what forms our identity, and it can be a difficult and long process to make that decision.

Not only is this process difficult due to the number of choices to consider, but we also need to confront the beliefs we grew up with and challenge those thoughts with a fresh perspective to see if they still hold true or not.

Choose one

Do the differences between religions mean that they are actually referring to different realities? Or just different names/interpretations of the same ultimate reality?

How does your belief in one or multiple religions affect how you act toward others?

How does having so many religious choices affect your identity?

The Journey Ahead

Take 10 minutes to write down your preconceived notions about other religions. What is one thing you could do to challenge those today?



Attend a service from a different religion than your own. How does it seem similar to your religion, and what makes it different?



Invite friends over for dinner who follow different religions than you. Have each person share about their religion while others listen. Note similarities and differences.

To Learn More



Why Did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha, and Mohammed Cross the Road? Christian Identity in a Multi-Faith World
- by Brian McLaren

A Common Heart: An Experience of Interreligious Dialogue (Ed. by Netanel Miles-Yepetz)

Hero with a Thousand Faces - by Joseph Campbell

The Reason for God - by Timothy Keller

Jesus Among Other Gods - by Ravi Zacharias



<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/christ-and-culture-an-overview-of-a-christian-classic/>

<https://brianmclaren.net/blog/>

<https://curiouschristian.blog/2008/02/19/joseph-campbell-and-the-heros-journey/>

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/clarifying-exclusivism/>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=45zKtNpQPz4>