

### **Youth Group 9/23/20 - Intro to World Religions**

- What do you think religion is? What are some things you think of as being related to religion?

- Some definitions of religion:

- a system of beliefs and practices that provides values to give life meaning and coherence by directing a person toward transcendence

- a set of beliefs that acts as a lens through which we seek to explain what life is all about, who we are, and how we should spend our time

- Is Christianity a religion? See James 1:27

\_\_\_\_\_ is religious.

- Read Acts 17:22-31. Why is learning about other religions important?

- 1. It helps us \_\_\_\_\_ to other people.

- 2. It shows us what is \_\_\_\_\_ about Christianity.

- 3. It helps us think about and understand our own \_\_\_\_\_ better.

- 4. It gives us \_\_\_\_\_ in what we believe.

- Any others reasons you can think of?

- What distinguishes Biblical (Orthodox) Christianity from *all other religions*?

**1. Christianity is based on objective and verifiable historical \_\_\_\_\_**

- No other religion can say this.

- Islam - Muhammad's visions

- Mormonism - Joseph Smith's visions

- Jehovah's witnesses - Charles Russell's special insight into the Bible

- Christian science - Mary Baker Eddy's miraculous healing

- Hinduism/Buddhism – based in their personal experience of the world

- Scientology – based on a new way of looking at the brain (not historical or verifiable)

- Atheism – based on personal sense that God doesn't exist

**2. Belief that Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_**

- No other religion says that Jesus is (the) God.

- What are some things we could believe about Jesus that would be against Christianity's belief?

**3. We are saved by \_\_\_\_\_ and not by \_\_\_\_\_**

- Every other religion says you are saved by something you must perform.

- What are some things that other religions might say you must do to be saved?

#### 4. God is a triune being ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) > Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

(We will talk about why this is important at a later youth group)

- No other religion believes God is this way.
  - What can religions believe about God's person?
    - Atheism - there is \_\_\_\_\_ god
    - Pantheism - \_\_\_\_\_ is god
    - Polytheism - there are \_\_\_\_\_ gods
    - Monotheism - there is \_\_\_\_\_ god
  - Which of these is Christianity?
- As we go forward with different religions, some important questions we want to ask are:
- What does this religion believe...
    - ...about God?
    - ...about man?
    - ...is wrong with the world?
    - ...has been/is being/will be done to make it right?
    - ...is the source for knowing these things?
  - How would Biblical (Orthodox) Christianity answer these questions?

#### Study Guide

- Is Christianity a religion? Yes  
\_\_\_Everyone\_\_\_ is religious.

- Read Acts 17:22-31. Why is learning about other religions important?

- 1. It helps us \_\_\_witness\_\_\_\_\_ to other people.
- 2. It shows us what is \_\_\_vital\_\_\_\_\_ about Christianity.
- 3. It helps us think about and understand our own \_\_\_\_\_beliefs\_\_\_\_\_ better.
- 4. It gives us \_\_\_confidence\_\_\_\_\_ in what we believe.

1. Christianity is based on objective and verifiable historical \_\_\_fact\_\_\_\_\_

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2. Belief that Jesus is \_\_\_God\_\_\_\_\_

- No other religion says that Jesus is (the) God.
- What are some things we could believe about Jesus that would be against Christianity's belief?

That Jesus is just a good man/prophet. That Jesus is A God rather than THE God. That Jesus didn't actually become a man. That Jesus didn't die/resurrect/live perfectly.

3. We are saved by \_\_\_faith\_\_\_\_\_ and not by \_\_\_works\_\_\_\_\_

- Every other religion says you are saved by something you must perform.
- What are some things that other religions might say you must do to be saved?

4. God is a triune being (\_Trinity\_) > Father, Son, and Holy Spirit  
(We will talk about why this is important at a later youth group)

- No other religion believes God is this way.
  - What can religions believe about God's person?
    - Atheism - there is no god
    - Pantheism - Everything is god
    - Polytheism - there are many gods
    - Monotheism - there is one god
  - Which of these is Christianity? Monotheism
- As we go forward with different religions, some important questions we want to ask are:
- What does this religion believe...
    - ...about God?
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    - ...is the source for knowing these things?
  - How would Biblical (Orthodox) Christianity answer these questions?

## Youth Group 10/14/20 - Atheism

- Review from last time:
  - Everyone is religious. We all worship something, even atheists.
  - Learning about other religions...
    1. helps us witness to other people.
    2. shows us what is vital about Christianity.
    3. helps us think about and understand our own beliefs better.
    4. gives us confidence in what we believe.
  - 4 things that Christianity differs from all other religions:
    1. Christianity is based on objective and verifiable historical fact
    2. Jesus is God
    3. We are saved by faith and not by works
    4. The Trinity

### Atheism

- Atheism – Very simple beliefs: there is no \_\_\_\_\_
  - Difference between atheist and agnostic: Agnostics don't believe we can know whether or not God exists. Whether God exists or not doesn't matter to them. "Who cares?"
- Traditional Atheism
  - Historically speaking, Atheism is very \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Traditional atheism was very quiet and kept to itself.
  - They sought to coexist with other religions.
  - Had sophisticated arguments by great thinkers: Nietzsche, Sartre, Freud, Camus, Marx, Hume...
- New Atheism
  - Generally characterized by these things
    1. \_\_\_\_\_ - very excited about being atheists and want you to know
    2. \_\_\_\_\_ - specifically deny Christianity
    3. \_\_\_\_\_ - arguments are mostly scientific and not philosophical
    4. \_\_\_\_\_ - many believe Christians should be punished for their beliefs
    5. Unsophisticated – all their scientific arguments have been refuted many times over
  - In summary, new atheists are \_\_\_\_\_.
- Remember, as we go forward with different religions, some important questions we want to ask are:
  - What does this religion believe...
    - ...about God?
    - ...about man?
    - ...is wrong with the world?
    - ...has been/is being/will be done to make it right?
    - ...is the source for knowing these things?
- Problems with atheism
  1. \_\_\_\_\_ - They have no objective standard by which to truly call an action good or bad, what do they mean by "good"? people's opinion? Then there is no good.

2. \_\_\_\_\_ - why is there something rather than nothing? How did the universe begin/how did we get to today?

3. Determinism - if nothing spiritual exists everything we do is mechanistic (just molecules running into each other) and we should not be held responsible for our actions.

4. \_\_\_\_\_ - if nothing spiritual exists, there is nothing that makes me "me".

5. Consistency - If our mind evolved to survive then we can't trust it because it didn't evolve to find truth, only to believe whatever would help it stay alive.

6. \_\_\_\_\_ - Survival of the fittest tries to get rid of weak genes. Original atheism promoted racism. Darwin believed "inferior races" would be wiped out. The full title of Darwin's work on evolution: "On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life." Examples of weak genes.

7. \_\_\_\_\_ - Nothing is objectively evil. Many will argue that there can't be a god because there is evil in the world, but there is no evil without a God who has determined what is evil.

8. \_\_\_\_\_ - There is no point to anything. Goals require a mind, so if there is any purpose to the universe there must be a God.

9. \_\_\_\_\_ - Love does not exist. It is merely a chemical change in the brain. We think we "love," but really, we just have an evolutionary emotion to keep ourselves alive. How many atheist hospitals can you name?

10. The Unseen - Most atheists say only material objects exist. What about thoughts, numbers, existence, concepts, etc.?

- Bottom line: Atheism does not ultimately explain why we are here, what gives life meaning, what happens to us after we die, why there seems to be some reported miracles, why we have an intrinsic conscience for right and wrong, why we seek for purpose and justice, why atheistic countries tend to commit the most atrocities, etc.

- Christianity's belief: There is a God.

- What is the evidence for this being the case? Think about the problems with atheism.

## Study Guide

- Atheism – There is no \_\_\_god\_\_\_\_\_
- Historically speaking, Atheism is very \_\_\_\_\_uncommon\_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_Boldness\_\_\_\_\_ - very excited about being atheists and want you to know
2. \_\_\_Focus\_\_\_\_\_ - specifically deny Christianity
3. \_\_\_Science\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_Persecution\_\_\_\_\_ - believe Christians should be punished for their beliefs

- In summary, new atheists are \_\_\_spicy\_\_\_\_\_.

- Remember, as we go forward with different religions, some important questions we want to ask are:

- What does this religion believe...

...about God? There is no god

...about man? Man is the random result of molecular activity

...is wrong with the world? Need to weed out weakness in the world

...has been/is being/will be done to make it right? Natural selection>survival of the fittest

...is the source for knowing these things? Science, Darwin

- Problems with atheism

1. \_\_\_Ethics\_\_\_\_\_ - They have no objective standard by which to truly call an action good or bad, what do they mean by "good"? people's opinion? Then there is no good.
2. \_\_\_Existence\_\_\_\_\_ - why is there something rather than nothing? How did the universe begin/how did we get to today? No answer.
3. Determinism - if nothing spiritual exists everything we do is mechanistic (just molecules running into each other) and we should not be held responsible for our actions.
4. \_\_\_Identity\_\_\_\_\_ - if nothing spiritual exists, there is nothing that makes me "me"
5. Consistency - If our mind evolved to survive then we can't trust it because it didn't evolve to find truth, only to believe whatever would help it stay alive.
6. \_\_\_Evolution\_\_\_\_\_ - Survival of the fittest tries to get rid of weak genes. Original atheism promoted racism, Darwin believed inferior races would be wiped out. The full title of Darwin's work on evolution: "On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life."
7. \_\_\_Evil\_\_\_\_\_ - Nothing is objectively evil. Many will argue that there can't be a god because there is evil in the world, but there is no evil without God.
8. \_\_\_Purpose\_\_\_\_\_ - There is no point to anything. Goals require a mind.
9. \_\_\_Love\_\_\_\_\_ - Love does not exist. It is merely a chemical change in the brain. We think we "love," but really we just have an evolutionary emotion to keep ourselves alive. How many atheist hospitals can you name?
10. The Unseen - Most atheists say only material objects exists. What about thoughts, numbers, existence, concepts, etc.?

## Youth Group 10/28/20 - Hinduism

### Review

- 4 things that Christianity differs from all other religions:
  1. Christianity is based on objective and verifiable historical fact
  2. Jesus is God
  3. We are saved by faith and not by works
  4. The Trinity

### Hinduism

- Hinduism has over 1.2 billion followers with almost 1 billion living in \_\_\_\_\_
- Hinduism didn't really have a \_\_\_\_\_ but developed over time
- Hinduism is not really 1 religion but a family of religions
  - To be under the umbrella of hinduism you must...
    1. Believe in the Vedas (their scripture)
    2. Respect the varying levels of Gods and spirits
    3. Participate in the \_\_\_\_\_ system
    4. Believe in \_\_\_\_\_

#### 1. The Vedas

- The Vedas are a collection of writings written between 1500 and 1000 BC and contain teachings on spiritual knowledge that encompass all of life

- Mostly \_\_\_\_\_, arranged by verses we call mantras

- Excerpt about creation "there was neither non-existence nor existence then; there was neither the realm of space nor the sky which is beyond. What stirred? Where? In whose protection? Was there water, bottomlessly deep? There was neither death nor immortality then. There was no distinguishing sign of night nor of day. That one breathed, windless, by its own impulse. Other than that there was nothing beyond...Whence this creation has arisen – perhaps it formed itself, or perhaps it did not – the one who looks down on it, in the highest heaven, only he knows – or perhaps he does not know."

- The Vedas exert very little influence over hinduism today

#### 2. Hindu gods

- There are 330 million gods
- These gods often have specific things they are gods of
  - For example: love, truth, oceans, winds, rain, fire, destruction, harvest, food, wealth etc.
- You can believe in any number of them
- Can have idols of them or not
- Hindus can be have very impersonal or personal relationship with the gods

### 3. Caste system

- People are categorized into different groups or "castes" based on what family you were born into. You do not choose it.
- Your caste determines things such as what \_\_\_\_\_ you are able to have and who you can \_\_\_\_\_
- The 4 castes are
  1. Teachers, scholars, and priests
  2. Warriors and rulers
  3. Merchants and other landowners
  4. Laborers (viewed way lower than the top 3)
- There is another group that doesn't even get classified called the "untouchables" that include occupations such as street sweepers, latrine cleaners, etc.
- The Indian government uses this system to this day

### 4. Reincarnation

- Reincarnation is the belief that we are reborn either in a higher or lower caste depending on how good you were in the previous life. This is Karma (the belief that you get what you deserve)
  - Contrast with Psalm 103:10 "He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities."
  - Ecclesiastes 7:15 "There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evil-doing."
  - Ecclesiastes 8:14 "there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous."
- The four goals of Hinduism are...

1. \_\_\_\_\_ (especially physical)
2. \_\_\_\_\_ (material prosperity)
3. \_\_\_\_\_ (do what advances you spiritually)
4. \_\_\_\_\_ (liberated from reincarnation cycle)

- Salvation is not from death or hell but from being reincarnated again
- Salvation is achieved by works, knowledge, and devotion
- When you are saved, you cease to exist and become part of the spiritual oneness
  - This is called \_\_\_\_\_

- What does this religion believe...

- ...about God?
- ...about man?
- ...is wrong with the world?
- ...has been/is being/will be done to make it right?
- ...is the source for knowing these things?



### Study Guide

- Hinduism has over 1.2 billion followers with almost 1 billion living in (India)
- Hinduism didn't really have a (start) but developed over time
- Participate in the (caste) system
- Believe in (reincarnation)
- Mostly (poems), arranged by verses we call mantras
- Your caste determines things such as what (jobs) you are able to have and who you can (marry)
- 1. (Pleasure)
- 2. (Productivity)
- 3. (Duty)
- 4. (Salvation)
- This is called (nirvana)

## Youth Group 11/11/20 - Buddhism

### Review

- What four things set Christianity apart from every other religion?

### Buddhism

- Buddhism has around 500 million followers and is the dominant religion of many Asian countries. About half live in \_\_\_\_\_. Other countries with high Buddhist populations include Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Japan, and South Korea.

- Buddhism developed from the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, "the Buddha", a teacher who lived in northern India between the 6th and 4th centuries BC. His teachings are called "dharma".

- The term Buddha means "\_\_\_\_\_". There is not only 1 Buddha. You can become a Buddha too if you become enlightened.

- The monks and nuns that follow Buddhism are called "Sangha".

- The leading monk in Tibetan Buddhism is called the "\_\_\_\_\_". He is thought to be a reincarnation of a past Dalai Lama.

- Like Hinduism, Buddhism has many different and even contradictory forms.

- Many celebrities claim to be Buddhist: Mark Zuckerberg, Brad Pitt, Tiger Woods, etc.

- The coolest Buddhists are Shaolin Monks > Buddhist warrior monks.

### Beliefs

- God: Buddhism is a \_\_\_\_\_. They do not follow any god.

- Scripture: There are some sacred texts that describe suffering and the path to enlightenment

- Primary problem: \_\_\_\_\_

- Suffering is caused by desire and ignorance

- Like Hinduism, Buddhists also believe in \_\_\_\_\_ > you get what you deserve

- Buddhism does not propose to end all suffering

- Buddhists believe in \_\_\_\_\_

- Each person must live a succession of lives

- You can be reborn as 1 of 6 beings based on your works in the previous life >

- 3 good: heavenly, demi-god, human

- 3 bad: animal, hungry ghost, hellish

- The ultimate spiritual goal of Buddhism is to escape the reincarnation cycle by reaching  
\_\_\_\_\_

- There is no permanence to human souls
- Ultimate nirvana is reached by \_\_\_\_\_
- How is the Buddhist view of reincarnation different than Hindu?
- Another goal of Buddhism is to find inner peace and wisdom. How do they find inner peace and wisdom?
  - By overcoming \_\_\_\_\_ > not letting suffering affect you
  - Becoming enlightened by experiencing Nirvana = losing self to the universe
    - We can experience nirvana through \_\_\_\_\_
  - Devotion: Ritual prayer (often with the expectation that no one is listening), prostration, offerings, pilgrimage, chanting
- Where we agree with Buddhists:
  - Something is broken in the world, suffering is bad, worldly pleasures are fleeting and can't satisfy
- Where we disagree with Buddhists:
  - Sin, not suffering is the main problem
  - Karma doesn't exist
  - We can't be saved by our own efforts
  - We need a savior to get rid of suffering once for all
- What does this religion believe...
  - ...about God?
  - ...about man?
  - ...is wrong with the world?
  - ...has been/is being/will be done to make it right?
  - ...is the source for knowing these things?

### Study Guide

- What four things set Christianity apart from every other religion? Christianity is based on objective, verifiable, historical fact. Jesus is God. We are saved by faith and not works. The Trinity.

- Buddhism has around 500 million followers and is the dominant religion of many Asian countries. About half live in China. Other countries with high Buddhist populations include Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Japan, and South Korea.

- The term Buddha means "enlightened". There is not only 1 Buddha. You can become a Buddha too if you become enlightened.

The leading monk in Tibetan Buddhism is called the "Dalai Lama". He is thought to be a reincarnation of a past Dalai Lama.

- God: Buddhism is a way of life. They do not follow any god.

- Primary problem: suffering

- Like Hinduism, Buddhists also believe in Karma > you get what you deserve

- Buddhists believe in reincarnation

- The ultimate spiritual goal of Buddhism is to escape the reincarnation cycle by reaching nirvana

- Ultimate nirvana is reached by doing good works

- By overcoming suffering > not letting suffering affect you

- We can experience nirvana through meditation

## Islam

- Review: 4 unique traits of Christianity

### Islam

#### Facts

- Followers of Islam are called \_\_\_\_\_.

- There are about 1.8 billion Muslims in the world, and are mostly concentrated in North Africa, the Middle East, Western Asia, and Indonesia.

- Founded by \_\_\_\_\_ around 600 AD in Arabia.

- Muhammad had visions where God told him the real truth about himself. He wrote down what God told him which became the \_\_\_\_\_, their sacred scripture.

- Muhammad is not just the instrument God used but is also the ideal Muslim. His life is one they try to emulate. The other text that some Muslims use is called the Hadith which is a collection of writings about Muhammad's day to day life.

- Islam is broken up into Sunni and Shia Muslims. They are about 85% Sunni (believe Muhammad's first convert and friend is successor) and 15% Shia (believe Muhammad's cousin is successor). Sunnis believe their leader should be chosen by the people where Shi'ites believe it must be a direct descendant of Muhammad.

#### Beliefs

- God: \_\_\_\_\_. Allah is the Muslim word for God, not God's name.

- Islam is monotheistic > Allah is the only God

- Do not believe in the trinity, he is a single-person god

- Allah is transcendent, all-powerful, all-knowing, Creator, Judge

- Allahu Akbar: "God is most great"

- Scripture: Quran (which means "the recitation"). They believe that the Bible is corrupted.

- The Quran is believed to be eternal and only remains the Quran in its original language (Arabic). The actual book itself is holy.

- Rituals: Deeds (what you do) are more important than doctrine (what you believe). You are a Muslim if you do these things:

- Five pillars of Islam:

1. Confession - "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger."

2. Ritual prayer 5 times per day facing Mecca.

3. Pilgrimage to Mecca.

4. Fasting (Ramadan).

5. Giving of alms.

- Jesus: Islam affirms that Jesus was born of a virgin, that he lived a sinless life, that he performed mighty miracles, and that he will come again at the end of history.

- However, it explicitly denies that He is God, that He died on the cross, or that He was resurrected.

- Other beliefs:

- Believe in many of the characters of the OT but believe Bible is corrupted

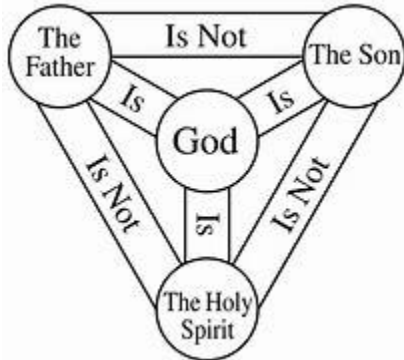
- No original sin

- Justification by works

## The Trinity

### What is the Trinity?

1. God is \_\_\_\_\_ persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
2. Each person is \_\_\_\_\_ God
3. There is \_\_\_\_\_ God



To help us understand the trinity, the most important thing to remember is that

\*\*\*God is first and foremost a Father\*\*\*

- He is not primarily the ruler/creator (which makes him dependent on creation to be who he is)
- What characterizes a father? Giving life and loving
- He has been life-giving (begetting) to his Son and loving Him since eternity
- Since God has always loved the son, it is characteristic of God to create and love others

### Why the trinity matters

1. A single-person god can't be a loving father
  - If God is one person then love for another is not in his nature
  - God could not be love with no one to love (same with other outgoing characteristics)
    - To be God means you don't depend on anything else to be who you are
    - If Allah is loving, he is dependent on his creation to be who he is and so is not God
  - He could not be a father without a child
  - Single alone-for-all-eternity god is fundamentally self-centered and self-gratifying
    - They do not like creation
  - Single-person gods create merely to rule and be served > sin is to not perform (external)
    - Our God creates out of overflowing love > sin is to not love (matter of the heart)
2. Our salvation depends on the trinity
  - God so loved the world that he gave his son (John 3:16)
    - a single-person God could not offer this salvation, couldn't love and has no son to give
  - If Jesus is not fully God, he is a creature and could not bear the full wrath of God, only God can save
3. We could not be God's children if he were not a father
  - If God were not a father, he could never give us the right to be his children, we would be distant hirelings
4. A single-person God would not have created or spoken
  - If God were single why would he speak? Why should he start now? Why would he have created?
  - A non-father is not capable of bringing forth life/creation
  - Creation exists because God loves
    - His love comes first and it is his love that creates and gives life

5. The Trinity allows for acceptance of diversity

- The Trinity is a unity among diversity, different persons but 1 God
- This is why we can celebrate diversity i.e. the church, marriage, families
  - What happens to unity in the non-Christian worldview?
- Single-person god is alone for eternity, why would he value any besides him?
  - Under Allah cultures are made uniform = one way of praying, one way of marrying, buying, fighting, relating
  - In Eastern religions what is the goal? Nirvana, to become part of the oneness

6. The Trinity allows for acceptance of authority

- The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are equal in value but subordinate in role
- This is why we can celebrate submitting to authority i.e. marriage, work, church, families
  - Submitting to authority doesn't mean they are more valuable, Jesus shows this to be true because he submits to the Father but is still fully God
- Groups of people (egalitarians, evangelical feminists) that want to undermine the roles of women and men in churches and marriages have to attack the trinity to defend their position

7. Trinitarian God needs nothing > He is fully glorious on His own

- A single-person god needs worship and service to be glorious, he has needs and so is not God

\*\*\*Belief in the trinity is central to Christianity.

## Study Guide

- Is Christianity a religion? Yes  
\_\_Everyone\_\_ is religious.

- Read Acts 17:22-31. Why is learning about other religions important?

- 1. It helps us \_\_witness\_\_ to other people.
- 2. It shows us what is \_\_vital\_\_ about Christianity.
- 3. It helps us think about and understand our own \_\_beliefs\_\_ better.
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1. Christianity is based on objective and verifiable historical \_\_fact\_\_

- No other religion can say this.
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  - Mormonism - Joseph Smith's visions
  - Jehovah's witnesses - Charles Russell's special insight into the Bible
  - Christian science - Mary Baker Eddy's miraculous healing
  - Hinduism/Buddhism – based in their personal experience of the world
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- Every other religion says you are saved by something you must perform.
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4. God is a triune being (\_\_Trinity\_\_) > Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

(We will talk about why this is important at a later youth group)

- No other religion believes God is this way.
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- Which of these is Christianity? Monotheism

- As we go forward with different religions, some important questions we want to ask are:

- What does this religion believe...
  - ...about God?
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  - ...is wrong with the world?
  - ...has been/is being/will be done to make it right?



...is the source for knowing these things?

- How would Biblical (Orthodox) Christianity answer these questions?

## Mormonism

- Review 4 things that separate Christianity from all other religions

### Facts

- The official name of the church is "the Church of Jesus Christ of \_\_\_\_\_".
- There are over \_\_\_\_\_ million Mormons. Most live in \_\_\_\_\_ and most American Mormons live in \_\_\_\_\_.
- Started by \_\_\_\_\_ in the early 1800's. He had visions from an angel who told him that the truth is written on golden plates buried near his home and he needed to translate them.
  - 2 Corinthians 11:14 "even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light."
  - To test him, his neighbor pretended to lose the messages and asked for another translation to see if it matched, but then there were new plates with new messages.
- The angel (conveniently) took the plates back when Joseph was done with them. These translations became the \_\_\_\_\_ in 1830.
- Joseph Smith "retranslated" the Bible - taking out all that didn't make sense to him (he did not know Greek or Hebrew).
  - As an aside, this is a hallmark of cult leaders > saying the church and scripture is corrupted, the gospel has been lost and I am bringing the right message
- Mormonism had a number of issues with its leadership
  - Multiple warrants for Joseph Smith's arrest (bank fraud)
  - Polygamy (Joseph Smith had 25-50 wives) > caused trouble amongst leaders
  - Believed the Garden of Eden was in Jackson County, MO and fought against the Missouri State Militia.
  - The next leader Brigham Young had 55 wives and moved the headquarters to Utah.
    - Also went to war with the US.

### Beliefs

**God** > God was first \_\_\_\_\_ on another planet who became a god because he obeyed the god of that planet.

- He lives with his wives from his planet who are now our "heavenly mothers"
- God created the world out of what existed before and now rules this world.

**Scripture** > The Book of Mormon is the "most correct" book in the world.

- Story of a Jew who fled to \_\_\_\_\_ in 600 BC from Israel where they were cursed with "blackness" and became the primary ancestors of the American Indians.
- They believe the Bible is the word of God as far as it is translated correctly. Smith preached the "restored gospel" and that the Bible had been corrupted.
- Brigham young claimed that every sermon he gave was scripture.
- New revelation from Mormon president can overrule any previous doctrine.

**Jesus** > Jesus is the first "spirit child", the product of sexual relations between God and one of the heavenly mothers. Satan was the second-born child to God and then the rest of humanity.

- Jesus is not God and is not eternal. There is no trinity.
- Jesus after rising from the dead went to \_\_\_\_\_ and preached the Mormon gospel to the people and started the Mormon church.

**Us** > The goal is for man to become a god and rule over his own world.

- We are all first spirit children which we have no memory of but God made a way for us to be gods by becoming humans so that we could do what god has already done.
  - So, is Mormonism monotheistic or polytheistic?
- Forgiveness of sins by works > exaltation happens by being a good Mormon
- They also believe that everyone is "saved" but your life determines which level of heaven you go to

### **Summary**

Even though they call Jesus Savior, they say he atones for sins, they say they worship him, they deny scripture, deny the trinity, deny that Jesus is God, deny that we have a sinful nature, deny salvation by faith alone, and deny a final judgment.

### **- 97% of Mormons believe they are a Christian religion**

- President Brigham Young said, "We, the Latter-day Saints, take the liberty of believing more than our Christian brethren: we not only believe ... the Bible, but ... the whole of the plan of salvation that Jesus has given to us. Do we differ from others who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? No, only in believing more."
- Mormons try to say that they are Christianity plus a few other things (they try to downplay the differences) when in fact Mormonism is an attack on everything that Christianity believes.

### **Answers**

- The official name of the church is "the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints".
- There are over 15 million Mormons. Most live in the US and most American Mormons live in Utah.
- Started by Joseph Smith in the early 1800's.
- These translations became the book of Mormon in 1830.
- God > God was first a man on another planet who became a god because he obeyed the god of that planet.
- Story of a Jew who fled to America in 600 BC from Israel where they were cursed with "blackness" and became the primary ancestors of the American Indians.
- Jesus after rising from the dead went to America and preached the Mormon gospel to the people and started the Mormon church.

- **Identifying problems** > The hard thing about cults is that they say a lot of things that seem right but we have to listen and read carefully to know what they actually mean. You can say the same things that Christians say but mean something completely different. We have to remember what sets Christianity apart (becoming so familiar with “the real” thing) so that we won’t be led astray.

“Are Mormons Christians?” article written by a Mormon.

(<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/new-era/1998/05/are-mormons-christians?lang=eng>)

“But there are sincere people out there who believe the Latter-day Saints aren’t Christians. In fact, the accusation that we are not Christians is probably the most commonly heard criticism of the LDS Church and its doctrines today. Why would anyone say such a thing? Isn’t the name of our church The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? Do we not worship Christ? Is not the Book of Mormon another testament of Jesus Christ? How could anyone seriously doubt that Latter-day Saints are Christians?”

### *The Doctrinal Exclusion*

This type of argument claims that since the Latter-day Saints do not always interpret the Bible as other Christians do, we must not be Christians. But, in fact, other denominations also differ among themselves doctrinally, and it is unreasonable to demand that Latter-day Saints conform to a single standard of “Christian” doctrine when no such single standard exists.

For example, the Latter-day Saints are accused of worshipping a “different god” because we do not believe in the traditional Trinity. “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost” (A of F 1:1) as taught in the New Testament. What Latter-day Saints do not believe is the non-Biblical doctrine formulated by the councils of Nicaea (A.D. 325) and Chalcedon (A.D. 451) centuries after the time of Jesus—the doctrine that God is three coequal persons in one substance or essence. We do not believe it because it is not scriptural. As Harper’s Bible Dictionary states: ‘The formal doctrine of the Trinity as it was defined by the great church councils of the fourth and fifth centuries is not to be found in the New Testament.’

Jesus didn’t teach the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity. The New Testament writers didn’t have any idea of it. The doctrine itself wasn’t invented until centuries later. So one can’t say the Latter-day Saints are not true Christians for not accepting it, unless one also excludes Jesus, his disciples, and the New Testament Church, who similarly did not know or teach it.

Finally, quite often we hear that Latter-day Saints are not Christians because true Christians believe in salvation by grace, while the Latter-day Saints believe in salvation through our own good works. But this is a misunderstanding. Yes, Latter-day Saints do believe we must serve God with all our “heart, might, mind, and strength” (D&C 4:2). But the Book of Mormon makes perfectly clear that it is impossible for us to completely earn or deserve our blessings from God (Mosiah 2:21, 24); that redemption can never come through individual effort alone, but only through the Atonement of Jesus Christ (2 Ne. 2:3, 5–8); and that—after all we can do (Alma 24:11)—we are saved by grace (2 Ne. 10:24; 2 Ne. 25:23).”

- What are some things wrong here?

## What's wrong?

Doctrine and Covenants 4:2 "Therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day."

- What's wrong?

- 1 Thess. 5:23-24 "Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it."

Alma 24:11 "And now behold, my brethren, since it has been all that we could do (as we were the most lost of all mankind) to repent of all our sins and the many murders which we have committed, and to get God to take them away from our hearts, for it was all we could do to repent sufficiently before God that he would take away our stain"

- What's wrong?

- Titus 3:4-6 "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior"

2 Nephi 10:24 "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, reconcile yourselves to the will of God, and not to the will of the devil and the flesh; and remember, after ye are reconciled unto God, that it is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved."

2 Nephi 25:23 "For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do."

- What's wrong?

- 2 Cor. 5:17-18 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself"

- Romans 5:10 "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life."

2 Nephi 2:5-8 "Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth. Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered. Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah, who layeth down his life according to the flesh, and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit, that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, being the first that should rise."

- What's hard about Christianized cults is that they will use a lot of words and phrases that we are familiar with that may not say anything wrong. This passage is a mash-up of a dozen different Bible words and phrases so it may not say anything wrong, but we must know the whole picture of a religion, and that they do not believe in the 3 essential beliefs of Christianity.

## Youth Group - Other Cults - 1/27/21

- Review 4 things that separate Christianity from all other religions

### **Hebrew Roots**

- About 300,000 followers.
  - Generally, believe that Jesus is indeed the Messiah, and that salvation comes through him.
    - Hold to the \_\_\_\_\_ (OT law/law of Moses), including observing Sabbath (Saturdays), feasts, holy days, etc.
  - Believe that since \_\_\_\_\_ was a Jew and he followed/obeyed the Torah, we should too.
    - They vary in how much they reject New Testament teachings.
  - This "movement" has been more grassroots in nature, and has largely existed \_\_\_\_\_.
- There are very few formal gatherings and meetings, and many of its adherents will attend a Jewish synagogue in order to participate in corporate worship.
- Primary problems with this belief system:
    - Denial of the work of Christ
      - Accepting a general belief in Christ as savior, while generally rejecting that his perfect obedience counts for us and that he has fulfilled the Mosaic law.
      - Ultimately believe in Faith + Works to be saved
    - "Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath." Colossians 2:16-17

### **7th Day Adventist**

(Many would disagree that this is a cult)

- \_\_\_\_\_ million followers
- They generally believe normal Christian beliefs with the exception of the following:
  - Hold the writings of \_\_\_\_\_ (co-founder) on a level equal to scripture.
  - It is sin to not worship on \_\_\_\_\_. (See Colossians 2:16-17 above)
  - Death is an unconscious state for **all** people until the end of the world.
  - There is no \_\_\_\_\_
- This last point is particularly concerning since hell as punishment for sin is essential to the gospel.
- If there is no eternal punishment then:
  - sin is either not that bad or isn't punished which means God either isn't holy or isn't just.
  - what did Jesus save us from?
  - is God actually merciful?
  - someone besides Jesus (AKA not God) could've taken our punishment.
  - why share the gospel?
  - why does the Bible say there is eternal punishment?
- The parts of 7<sup>th</sup> day Adventist that would classify it as a cult are: charismatic leader, writings on equal authority to the Bible, significant distortion of Biblical teaching to the point that it isn't the gospel anymore.

### **Witchcraft/Wicca**

- Unclear how many followers. Estimates around 1 million.
- Existed essentially since the \_\_\_\_\_ of recorded history
  - Pharaoh had sorcerers that were able to imitate some of the miracles that God did through Moses. 1 Samuel 28 (Medium of Endor)
- Often will worship the " \_\_\_\_\_ "

- \_\_\_\_\_ - everything is God
  - Look for power / fulfillment / joy by “tapping into” this
  - Complete denial of a good creator God who is distinct from his creation
- Accepting of other religions > If you want to practice Wicca and still be a Hindu, or Buddhist, or even Christian, they’re happy to have you.
- They do practice \_\_\_\_\_ > They have rituals and ceremonies where they call upon deities to assist them, or attempt to speak to the dead, or communicate with/pray to celestial bodies like the moon and stars.
- Their general creed is: “If it harm none, do what you will.”
- Organized Covens and Priesthood
- Modern Wicca
  - Distance themselves from the term “witch”
  - Decreased the nudity

### **Christian Science**

- About 1/2 million followers.
- Founded in 1875 by \_\_\_\_\_. She experienced a miraculous healing just by reading the Bible.
  - Her conclusion was that the scriptures have the power to \_\_\_\_\_, and so she began to seek to find out how.
- She wrote the book “Science and Health” explaining how reading the Bible and praying can heal you.
  - This book is considered sacred writing and inspired and is studied alongside the Bible.
  - The last 100 pages are stories of people who claimed to be healing just by reading the Bible.
- Christian Science is all about healing. Many refuse to go to the doctor.
- Eddy claimed that the Bible was her only authority but denies the trinity, the atonement, and the deity of Christ (so everything that makes us Christian).

### **Scientology**

- Unclear how many followers. Probably between 1/2 and 4 million.
- Founded in early 1900's by L. Ron Hubbard.
  - Never claimed divine inspiration.
- Started as a new take on psychotherapy and ended up as a religion.
- Many famous actors adhere to this: Tom Cruise, Jon Travolta, etc.
- Goal is to remove negative memories from the mind until clear.
- Very \_\_\_\_\_. Current approximate cost to get to level 9 is \$400,000. Takes in 125 million dollars in dues each year.
- "If a man really wants to make a million dollars, the best way would be to start his own religion." - Hubbard

(Torah), (Jesus), (online), (22), (Ellen White), (Saturdays), (Hell), (beginning), (mother goddess), (pantheistic), (magic), (Mary Baker Eddy), (heal), (expensive)

Youth Group - 2/10/21 - Jehovah's Witnesses

Review - 4 things that separate Christianity from all other religions

## Jehovah's Witnesses AKA The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society

### Facts

- Over \_\_\_\_\_ members worldwide. Almost 20 million weekly attendees.
- Started by \_\_\_\_\_ in the late 1800's.
  - Russell was raised in a Christian family but wavered from the faith.
  - Started teaching that things he didn't like about the Bible were not true (i.e. trinity, hell).
  - He claimed the Bible could only be understood according to his interpretations.
  - Had several failed prophecies about the end of the world.
    - Deuteronomy 18:21-22 "And if you say in your heart, 'How may we know the word that the Lord has not spoken?'— when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken."
- The \_\_\_\_\_ is still circulated with about 800,000 copies printed per day. Circulates 42 million copies each month which makes it the largest circulation of any magazine in the world.
- Known for their door-to-door visits
  - Funny story: Rev. 22:13 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.", Rev. 21:6 "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.", Rev. 1:17-18 ""Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."
- Places of worship are called Kingdom Halls.

### Scripture

- \_\_\_\_\_ of the Bible completed in 1961.
  - They took the KJV and changed the things they didn't like (i.e. John 1:1).
    - John 1:1 ESV "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."
    - John 1:1 NWT "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a God."
- They didn't actually translate, none of the 5 on the translation committee knew Greek or Hebrew.
- They say it's right because they are the only one to translate God's name correctly as \_\_\_\_\_ (from YHWH).
  - Regarding YHWH - Our Old Testaments typically translate this as LORD with small capital letters. The difficulty with YHWH is that Ancient Hebrew has no written vowels. Jehovah is technically not correct: they added the vowels from Adonai (which means lord) into YHWH.
- Russell's published commentaries are considered \_\_\_\_\_ and authoritative.

### Beliefs

- Believe that the Watchtower Society rules in place of God on Earth.



- Jesus is the angel \_\_\_\_\_ (created/not God), was only a man on earth (not God), and ceased to exist when he died (no resurrection).

- 1 Corinthians 15:14 "And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain."

- Jesus' death is not sufficient for sins if He is not God and didn't rise from the dead.

- Deny the Trinity and the Holy Spirit

- Salvation is by works and maintaining a good relationship with the watchtower society.

- When we die, we cease to exist until the end of time.

- The wicked cease to exist forever (annihilation).

- Only \_\_\_\_\_ people will get to live with Jehovah in heaven and rule with Jesus in his kingdom (misunderstanding Revelation 7).

- Revelation 7:3-4 "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel"

- Anyone born after 1935 (because that is when the number of Jehovah's witnesses hit 144,000) who is "saved" only gets to be on earth forever, not heaven.

- If they knock on our door, how should we interact with them?

(8 million), (Charles Taze Russell), (Watchtower magazine), (New World Translation), (Jehovah), (sacred), (Michael), (144,000)

The following is an article on the Jehovah's Witnesses website. <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/are-jehovahs-witnesses-christians/>

(References given are to the New World Translation)

### Are Jehovah's Witnesses Christian?

"Yes. We are Christians for the following reasons:

- We try to follow closely the teachings and behavior of Jesus Christ.—1 Peter 2:21.
- We believe that Jesus is the key to salvation, that "there is not another name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must get saved."—Acts 4:12.
- When people become Jehovah's Witnesses, they are baptized in the name of Jesus.—Matthew 28:18, 19.
- We offer our prayers in Jesus' name.—John 15:16.
- We believe that Jesus is the Head, or the one appointed to have authority, over every man.—1 Corinthians 11:3.

However, in a number of ways, we are different from other religious groups that are called Christian. For example, we believe that the Bible teaches that Jesus is the Son of God, not part of a Trinity. (Mark 12:29) We do not believe that the soul is immortal, that there is any basis in Scripture for saying that God tortures people in an everlasting hell, or that those who take the lead in religious activities should have titles that elevate them above others.—Ecclesiastes 9:5; Ezekiel 18:4; Matthew 23:8-10."

- What is wrong here? What reasons would we give for saying we are Christian?

## Youth Group 2/24/21 - Judaism

- Review 4 things that make Christianity distinct

### Judaism - (talking about modern, non-Christian Judaism)

#### Facts -

- There are \_\_\_\_\_ people worldwide who identify as Jewish.
  - There are more in \_\_\_\_\_ than any other continent
  - There are more in \_\_\_\_\_ than any other city in the world
- Many of the greatest minds and cultural influencers in history were Jewish: Albert Einstein, Karl Marx, George Gershwin, Leo Strauss, Sigmund Freud, Robert Oppenheimer, etc.
- The twin pillars of Judaism in the first century were \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (first 5 books of the Bible, OT Law)
  - The temple was run by the Sadducees, and the Torah was interpreted by the Pharisees.
  - After the temple was destroyed in 70AD (by the Romans), it was the Pharisaical form of Judaism (which focused on interpretation of Scripture) that became dominant in what is called "Rabbinic Judaism." Jews met in synagogues to focus on the study of the Torah, and they formed a new type of Judaism without sacrifices or rituals related to the temple.

#### Scripture

- Sacred writings - Hebrew Bible (Our Old Testament), \_\_\_\_\_ (Jewish civil and ceremonial law written by Jewish teachers [Rabbis])
- Talmud contains the Mishnah and the Gemara
  - Mishnah - Oral tradition that had been written down
  - Gemara - Rabbi commentary and analysis of the Mishnah

#### Beliefs

- \_\_\_\_\_ - There is one (and only one God) who exists and who alone deserves worship.
- \_\_\_\_\_ - Since it is Abraham and his descendants to whom the promises are made, it is important to try to remain ethnically Jewish.
  - A Gentile may convert to Judaism, but endogamy (marriage within one's own people group) is encouraged.
  - Rabbis have decided that, to be ethnically Jewish, your mom has to be Jewish.
- Mosaic law - Following the commands and practices described in the Torah.
  - Judaism is more about practice than doctrine. You are Jewish based on what you do rather than what you believe. (Contrast Christianity)

- For example, the Sadducees who deny resurrection/existence of angels/many writings of the OT are still Jewish just by their ethnicity and following the Mosaic Law.

### Branches of Judaism

- "Orthodox" (Hassidic Jews would fall under this category) - The most conservative branch. Practice the Torah meticulously.

- "Conservative" - The moderate branch of Judaism. More liberal in beliefs but conservative in practice. Try to meld tradition and change together. Do not believe in a coming Messiah but that we can eventually achieve an age of peace.

- "Reformed" - The most liberal branch. Don't believe the Bible is inspired. Don't believe in a coming Messiah as above. Don't believe in resurrection. This is the kind of Judaism you find in Hollywood.

### **Are Jews who do not believe that Jesus is the Messiah saved?**

No. (Acts 4:11-12, John 3:18, John 3:36, John 14:6, etc.)

This is despite the many benefits of being Jewish > Romans 9:4-5 "They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen."

### The Main Problem

- They do not accept Jesus as the Messiah
  - It helps to build a bridge with them that they believe the OT but they must know that Jesus is the promised Messiah.
- They are still waiting for a Messiah.

- Brainstorm: why wouldn't Jewish people accept Jesus as the Messiah?

### **How should Christians engage with those who are Jewish?**

1. We should be kind, loving, and compassionate toward Jews (keeping in mind the persecution they have received throughout history and that God chose them as the nation through which to save the world).
2. We should rejoice that they are already familiar with the Old Testament.
3. We should show them how we have all fallen short of God's commands and, therefore, need someone to make atonement for us (God demands perfection, not just general conformity, to his Law).
4. We should seek to show them that Jesus is the Messiah and God himself.

(14 million), (North America), (New York City), (Temple, Torah), (Talmud), (Monotheism),  
(Ethnocentrism)

## Youth Group 3/10/21 - Cults and Counterfeit Gospels

Review 4 things that separate Christianity from all other religions

### Cults and Counterfeit Gospels

- Cult - A group which claims to be in harmony with Christianity but denies foundational Christian doctrines. Generally, follow the instruction of 1 individual who dictates false teaching. (i.e., Mormon, Jehovah witness)

- Counterfeit gospel - A fraudulent \_\_\_\_\_ of the gospel that deceives. (i.e., Catholicism, prosperity gospel, theological liberalism)

- What kinds of things could be missing from a 100-dollar bill that would tip you off that it is counterfeit?

- "One missing element makes the whole bill counterfeit. So it is with the gospel."

### The one true gospel

1. The character of \_\_\_\_\_

- He is holy
- He is just
- He is gracious

- Why does each of these matter to the gospel?

(P.S. God can only be who He is because He is the trinity)

2. The sinfulness of \_\_\_\_\_

- Man is corrupted
- Man is rebellious
- Man is separated from God
- Man is spiritually dead

- Why does each of these matter to the gospel?

3. The sufficiency of \_\_\_\_\_

- Only Jesus alone can fully reconcile us to God because of who He is and what He has done.

- Why is this important?

4. The necessity of \_\_\_\_\_  
- Why can't we earn salvation by things we do?

5. The urgency of \_\_\_\_\_  
- Why does it matter that there is eternity? Why do we need to be urgent about it?

*If we take out any of these points, we no longer have the true gospel.*

### Heresy

- What is heresy?

- Heresies present "another God" or "another gospel"

- Both cults and counterfeit gospels do this

### Examples of heresies

- The Trinity > Truths = 1. God is three distinct persons, 2. Each person is fully God, 3. There is one God.

#### - **Trinitarian Heresies**

- \_\_\_\_\_ (denies truth 1) - denies 3 distinct persons in the trinity but say there is only 1 person who has 3 modes or wears 3 masks that one wears (water analogy)

- Why is this a problem?

- \_\_\_\_\_ (denies truth 2) - denies that Jesus is God

- Why is this a problem?

- \_\_\_\_\_ (denies truth 3) - denies that there is 1 God

- Why is this a problem?

- Jesus > Truth = Jesus is fully God and fully man yet is still only 1 person.

#### - **Christological Heresies**

- Jesus is not fully God

- Why is this a problem?

- Jesus is not fully man

- Why is this a problem?

- Jesus' humanity and deity are 2 distinct persons

- Why is this a problem?

(imitation), (God), (man), (Christ), (faith), (eternity), (that which deviates from standard biblical teaching), (modalism), (Arianism), (polytheism)

Youth Group 4/14/21 - Catholicism

- Counterfeit gospel - A fraudulent imitation of the gospel that deceives.

### **The One True Gospel**

1. The Character of God
2. The Sinfulness of Man
3. The Sufficiency of Christ
4. The Necessity of Faith
5. The Urgency of Eternity



## Catholicism (Roman Catholic Church)

### Facts

- About \_\_\_\_\_ followers
  
- Led by \_\_\_\_\_ who claims to follow the line of Saint Peter.
  
- The country with the most Catholics in the world is \_\_\_\_\_.
  
- 2<sup>nd</sup> most = \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 3<sup>rd</sup> most = \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 4<sup>th</sup> most = \_\_\_\_\_
  
- The Roman Catholic church was essentially the only Christian church from 590 AD (first pope) until 1054 AD when the \_\_\_\_\_ broke off.
  
- Then, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century the \_\_\_\_\_ began to separate from the Roman Catholic church during the Protestant Reformation.

### Beliefs

#### - **Similarities** >

- Trinity
- Jesus (fully God and man, sinless life, died/buried/resurrected)
- Sinfulness of man
- Necessity of salvation

#### - **Differences** >

#### - 3 sources of authority >

1. \_\_\_\_\_ [+apocrypha]

2. \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Teaching of the pope/church

- How many sources of authority do we have? What is/are they?

- Devotion to \_\_\_\_\_ - Who they say has no original sin and never sinned

- 2 types of sin >

1. Mortal (destroys the saving grace of God)

2. Venial (does not destroy)

- The 7 Sacraments > Saving grace is infused in the very act of performing them (doesn't matter what you believe)

1. Baptism - Baptism is act through which new birth occurs in infant forgiving all sins and is completed at confirmation

2. Confirmation

3. Eucharist (communion) - Transubstantiation

4. \_\_\_\_\_ - Includes confession of sin to a priest then doing something above and beyond to make amends for the sin (as prescribed by the priest)

- Confession makes you right with God > needed for mortal sins

5. Anointing of the sick – Includes extreme unction (forgiveness for those about to die)

6. Holy orders – becoming a priest

7. Matrimony (marriage)

- What we would say > We have 2 ordinances: Baptism and \_\_\_\_\_

- Strengthening Grace (not saving grace) is offered to us as we participate in faith in connection with the gospel

**- The massive difference = justification (being made right with God)**

- Catholics justified through faith in Christ AND their own works.

- Saving grace is infused through work (sacraments) which leads to progress towards justification

- Future justification is possible but not guaranteed > may have to pay more dues in purgatory

- Protestants are justified (saved) by God solely through faith in Christ.

- To trust in something in addition to Christ would say that Christ is not enough.

**The Protestant Reformation – 5 Solas**

Sola Fide = Faith alone

Sola Gratia = Grace alone

Solus Christus = Christ alone

Sola scriptura = Scripture alone

Sola Deo Gloria = To the Glory of God alone

In Roman Catholicism these things are changed to:

Faith plus works

Grace plus merit

Christ plus other mediators

Scripture plus tradition

To the Glory of God plus the glory of Mary and other saints

Video

(1.1 billion), (the pope), (brazil), (Mexico), (the Philippines), (USA), (Eastern orthodox church), (Protestants), (Bible), (tradition), (Mary), (penance), (the Lord's supper)

## Youth Group 4/28/21 – Prosperity “Gospel”

- Counterfeit gospel - A fraudulent imitation of the gospel that deceives.

### **The One True Gospel**

1. The Character of God
2. The Sinfulness of Man
3. The Sufficiency of Christ
4. The Necessity of Faith
5. The Urgency of Eternity

### **The Prosperity “Gospel”**

“The prosperity gospel is an idolatrous perversion of the gospel according to which Jesus is a means to God’s full blessings, primarily of wealth, health, and might, now available to those who trust and obey certain faith principles prescribed by a particular man of God.” - Dieudonné Tamfu

- It says that God's aim is to make believers healthy and wealthy in this life.

Quotes from prosperity preachers:

- Kenneth Copeland “God’s will for us, as believers, is prosperity and abundance.”
- Creflo Dollar "Some people say it's about peace, joy and love. NO!! It's about MONEY!"
- Joel Osteen "If you are struggling financially, then you have not got the victory."

"God didn't create you to be average or poor."

- About \_\_\_\_\_ of self-proclaimed Christians in the US believe that God gives material wealth to those who have enough faith.

- 96% in Nigeria. 82% in India. 71% in Guatemala.
- Global Christianity has been subtly infused with the prosperity gospel.

## Teachings

FYI Preachers and churches vary widely in how much prosperity influence there is.

- Distorted view of \_\_\_\_\_ - People have the spiritual power to manipulate the physical realm, the world.

- The world revolves around man's wants and others exist to serve you.

- Distorted focus on \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

- Promises of financial success through faith. Promises of physical health through faith.

- Distorted understanding of \_\_\_\_\_

- What does Jesus save us from?

- Sin and damnation in eternity or sickness and poverty on earth?

- Distorted interpretations of \_\_\_\_\_

- They rip texts from context >

- 3 John 2 "Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul."

- Does this promise good health?

- Psalm 103:2-3 "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases"

- Is this general praise or a guaranteed promise?

- 2 Corinthians 11:23-28

## We preach an " \_\_\_\_\_ " gospel

- God may just accomplish higher purposes in our sickness than in our health.

- 2 Cor. 12:9-10 "But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

- Following Christ includes sacrificing yourself.

- Luke 9:23 "And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

### **Why is prosperity gospel so dangerous?**

- It perverts our understanding of \_\_\_\_\_ in the world

- Is wealth always a sign of God's approval and poverty disapproval? No.

- It disregards the \_\_\_\_\_ of wealth.

- Does God give us more so we can get more? No. (2 cor. 8:13-14)

- Does God give us more so we can give more? Yes. (2 cor. 9:6-12)

- Everything is God's. We are stewards of it.

- It minimizes the \_\_\_\_\_ of wealth and feeds the desire to be rich (mark 10:23, 1 tim 6:9-10)

- It ignores the shift in Old Testament to New Testament:

- OT had abundance of promises of material reward for spiritual obedience (gen 17:1-2)

- New Testament does not promise material reward

- It commends \_\_\_\_\_ luxury over selfless generosity, teaches to indulge in pleasure and ignore the poor

- It appeals to the desires of the \_\_\_\_\_ instead of denying the flesh

- It encourages people to \_\_\_\_\_ their lives on things that don't last

- It exalts God's \_\_\_\_\_ above God's glory

- It makes God a means to an end rather than the end itself

- Evident in how little we give and how much we own

- It overlooks the \_\_\_\_\_ of suffering: Christians may suffer despite or because of their righteousness

- It fails to acknowledge the \_\_\_\_\_ of suffering

- God uses suffering to reveal his glory, teach us to rely on him, make us more like Christ, bring us to repentance, lead us to the reward

### **1 Timothy 6**

- The path to great gain = contentment and cautiousness about acquiring excess

- The path to total ruin = love of money, desire for riches

List of Prosperity preachers: Joel Osteen, Creflo Dollar, Benny Hinn, TD Jakes, Joyce Meyer, Kenneth Copeland, Kenneth Hagin, Mike Murdock, Todd White, Jesse Duplantis, Bill Johnson, Joseph Prince, John Bevere, etc.

(half), (man), (health and wealth), (salvation), (scripture), (adversity), (wealth), (purpose), (danger), (selfish), (flesh), (waste), (gifts), (design), (necessity)

Youth Group 5/26/21 – Theological Liberalism

- Counterfeit gospel - A fraudulent imitation of the gospel that deceives.

**The One True Gospel**

1. The Character of God
2. The Sinfulness of Man
3. The Sufficiency of Christ
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**Theological Liberalism – Saving Christianity from Itself**

- Theological liberalism arose out of the late \_\_\_\_\_ as Protestants attempted to reconfigure traditional Christian teaching in light of modern knowledge and values.

- What is it NOT?

- We are NOT talking about liberal \_\_\_\_\_ views

- We are NOT talking about Christians who \_\_\_\_\_ with you about something in the Bible

- We are NOT talking about people who \_\_\_\_\_ Christianity altogether

- What is it?

- **Theological liberalism is to call yourself a Christian and YET...**

- Deny \_\_\_\_\_

- Deny orthodox Christian \_\_\_\_\_ on the primary doctrines of Christianity



- Often done in an attempt to adapt to or appeal to changing or non-Christian \_\_\_\_\_

- Often uses language appearing to be biblical and claims to be \_\_\_\_\_ and contemporary.

### **Beliefs**

\*\*\*Rejects the final \_\_\_\_\_ of God's Word.\*\*\*

- Interprets it according to modern experiences/popular reasoning/contemporary science.

- Liberal Christian thinkers have argued that religion should be modern and progressive and that the meaning of Christianity should be interpreted from the standpoint of modern knowledge and experience.

- It tries to bring Christian thought into unity with the evolutionary world view and the movements of social reconstruction.

- It tries to make Christianity relevant and credible by making Christianity a “way of life” rather than about believing certain things.

- Rejects God's \_\_\_\_\_ and miraculous works in history

- The Bible is primarily symbolic/metaphor rather than real history

- Rejects seriousness of individual \_\_\_\_\_ - denounces justice while downplaying evangelism

- Rejects the Bible's teaching on the person and work of \_\_\_\_\_

- Traditional Protestant teachings place the substitutionary atonement of Christ at the center of Christianity, that Christ's death is the wrath-absorbing sacrifice that satisfies God's justice.

- Liberalism teaches that Christ's life is just a good example for us to follow but isn't something we must believe in.

- Rejects the Bible's teaching on \_\_\_\_\_ and eternity

- Rejects certain teachings when they become \_\_\_\_\_ or ridiculed

- Any examples you can think of?

- Rejects consistent teachings of church throughout history > claims to have progressed in knowledge and understanding

#### How Christian doctrines come to be rejected – Our example: Hell

Step 1 – Doctrine falls out of mention > Hell never discussed or preached from pulpit

Step 2 – Doctrine revised and kept in reduced form > The idea of Hell is meant to teach us something

Step 3 – Doctrine is ridiculed > Hell doesn't even make sense

Step 4 – Doctrine is changed to remove its offensiveness > Hell doesn't last forever, Hell is really not that bad

Summary – Theological Liberals believe they are making Christianity relevant, credible, beneficial, and humane when in fact what they do is change Christianity to something else. Theological Liberalism is a non-Christian religion. We trust the word of God over human wisdom, experience, and reason.

- This is one of the more common false teachings you can find in churches and Christian colleges.

#### World Religions Conclusion > Let's...

- believe the gospel in our lives

- guard the gospel in our churches

- spread the gospel in the world

(1700's), (political), (disagree), (reject), (scripture), (teaching), (new), (authority), (supernatural), (sin),  
(Christ), (judgment), (unpopular)